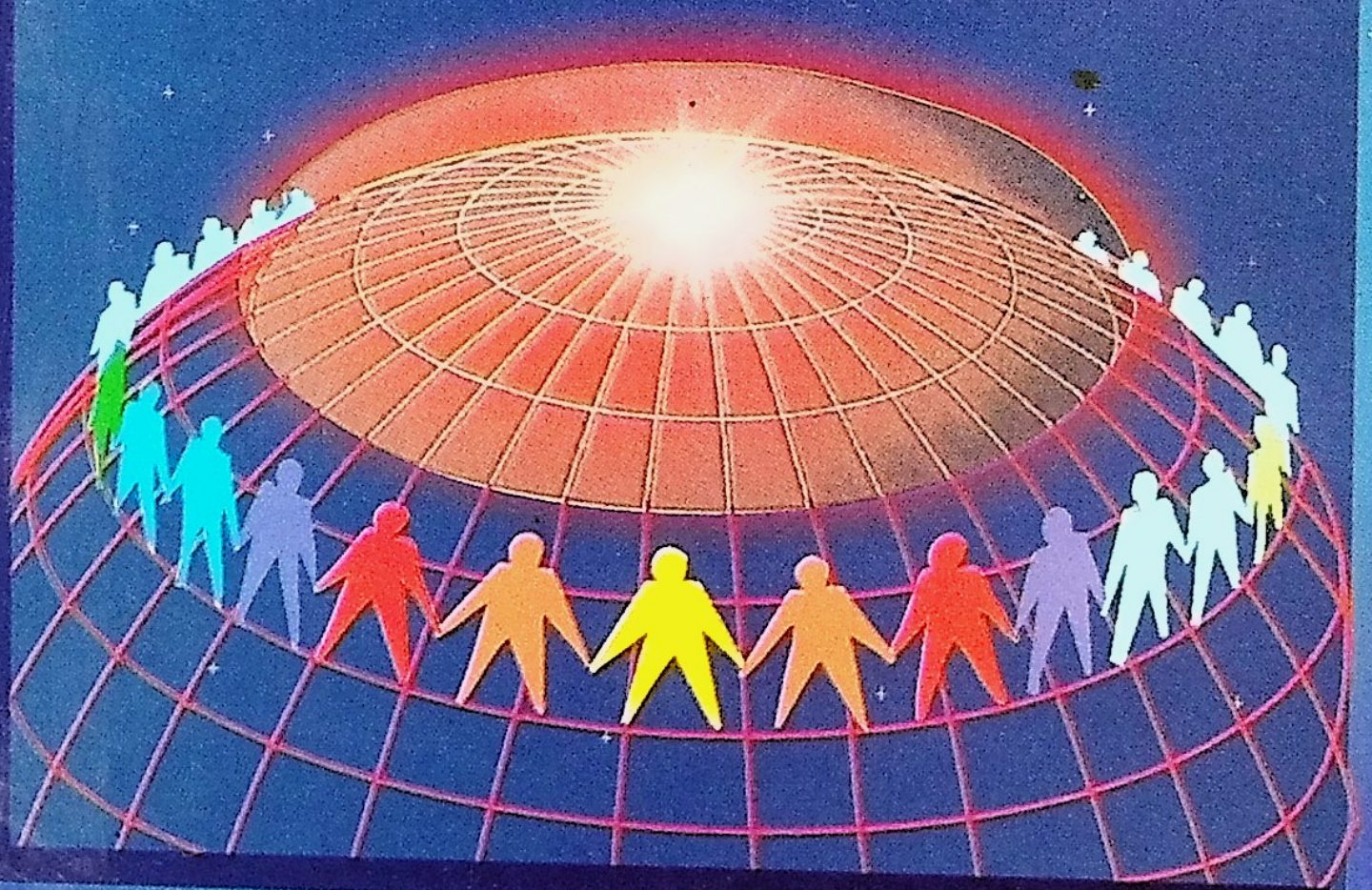


MISSION FOR ALL



A MISSION FOR ALL

By

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FOREWORD

One of the factors that have led to the rapid growth and mass acceptance of the Sant Nirankari Mission is that its message is quite convenient to understand and easy to follow. Its approach to spiritual enlightenment is straight-forward and needs no crutches of ritualism to stand. It goes with the day-to-day life in absolutely normal manner. The philosophy here is not loaded with complicated terminology. Even an ordinary person can understand and follow what is sought to be conveyed to him or her.

Mention any religious faith known to the world, the Formless God (Nirankar) forms the base. They would, however, appear to be different from each other, because the set of rites and rituals, modes of worship and holy scriptures they subscribe to vary from faith to faith, from sect to sect. The Sant Nirankari Mission concentrates on Nirankar and helps every seeker to know and realise the Divine Truth, irrespective of his or her religious, cultural and social background. Thus it is A Mission For All.

As the Mission grows, so does the demand for literature dealing with its ideology. Now that this spiritual movement has already served humanity for nearly seven decades, the younger generations may like to know its history. Then, the Mission has gradually diversified its activities with specific stress on social welfare, although its principal commitment remains to improve the quality of human life through spiritual enlightenment or God - consciousness. Many may be interested in knowing this aspect of the Mission also.

The present book, 'A Mission For All', in your benign hands seeks to meet this demand. Though small in volume, it is a precious result of hard labour put in by the two learned authors - Shri C.L. Gulati, Chadigarh, a retired Assistant Director

from the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, and Shri Kirpa Sagar, Faridabad a retired senior officer of the Indian Information Service and former Registrar of Newspapers for India and Additional Director General (News), All India Radio. Both are known to the Nirankari world for their powerful pen and the spirit of devotion and dedication to the Mission. In this book, they have not only discussed the ideology of the Mission but also given a detailed account of its history right from the beginning till today. There are separate chapters dealing with subjects like congregations and Samagams, organisation, social welfare and Nirankari literature.

I congratulate the esteemed authors for making this valuable addition to the Nirankari publications. I am also grateful to my esteemed colleague Shri Bhupender 'Bekal', Personal Secretary to His Holiness and Member Executive Committee, Sant Nirankari Mandal without whose active association and valuable guidance the effort would not have been such a brilliant success. I pray to His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj to bless them so that they continue to serve the Mission with ever increasing zeal and devotion.

It is hoped that the English knowing devotees and others interested in the Mission will find the book interesting and useful. I would recommend it to the Mission's functionaries also. By going through the book, they may gain greater confidence to reply questions relating to the Mission and its activities.

Ajaib Singh

Chairman, Publications
Sant Nirankari Mandal

November 6, 1997

THE SANT NIRANKARI MISSION
IS AN ALL-EMBRACING SPIRITUAL
MOVEMENT,
CUTTING ACROSS ALL CONSIDERATIONS
OF
CASTE, COLOUR AND CREED.

IT FIRMLY BELIEVES
THAT THE REALISATION OF GOD
IS THE REAL OBJECTIVE OF HUMAN LIFE
AND THIS CAN BE ACHIEVED THROUGH
THE BENEVOLENCE OF
THE LIVING TRUE MASTER (SATGURU).

THE REALISATION OF FATHERHOOD OF
GOD
TAKES A PERSON SPONTANEOUSLY
TO THE CHERISHED ACHIEVEMENT OF
UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD.

THE BEST MEDITATION HERE IS TO
REMEMBER GOD
ALL THE TIME EVERYWHERE (SIMRAN).
THE MISSION ALSO STRESSES THE NEED
AND IMPORTANCE OF THE COMPANY OF
SAINTS (SATSANG)
AND SERVICE TO HUMANITY (SEWA).

INTRODUCTION

The Sant Nirankari Mission is neither a new religion nor a sect of an existing religion, but an all-embracing spiritual movement dedicated to human welfare. It endorses and accomplishes the established age-old truth that Realisation of Fatherhood of God through the living True Master (Satguru) is the goal of human life and its spontaneous by-product is the cherished achievement of Universal Brotherhood which is inherently essential for peace and progress of the mankind.

No doubt victories in the field of material science have changed the face of the world, but the human being has suffered heavy losses on spiritual front. In its approach to religion, the world is as superstitious and dogmatic as the primitive civilization was. The great spiritual masters are remembered, their names repeated and holy scriptures worshipped but their message is neither understood, nor followed in action. Stung by the poison of hatred and pride, mankind is afflicted by the agony of artificial divisions of caste, creed and colour. There is conflict, there is tension, there is violence, there is bloodshed. The trend must be reversed before the ignorant world slides into the abyss of darkness and gloom. Misguided humanity with guided missiles must be made conscious of God, aligned with the Almighty, so that it escapes its own annihilation and extermination.

The Sant Nirankari Mission provides a firm and positive hope in as much as it aims at creating the understanding of spirituality through a living revelation of God thus paving the way to

universal peace, unity and fraternity. The Mission stresses the concept of one God for all and easily unfolds the idea of one common faith that suits and binds the whole human race emotionally. The Mission seeks to reveal God, the same for all religions, ignoring the non-essential rituals which are different for different religious faiths. The feeling of Universal Brotherhood so achieved, goes a long way in eliminating the possibilities of confrontation between one human being and the other.

The Mission glorifies spiritual masters of the past and their teachings enshrined in holy scriptures with the most needed stress on their adoption in day-to-day life, in the layman's actual experience. It has no rituals to impose, no penance to subject the seekers of Truth to. Here, the message is for the human being in a person and not for a member of any particular religious faith, caste, community or a nation.

When the Mission denies to be a religion, it does not seek to depart from spirituality. It simply disowns the definition of the word 'religion' as is generally proclaimed by the world, as a set of rites and rituals, outward symbols, modes of worship, taboos, dogmas, etc. The Mission values the spirit, the soul, which is common to all. And in case we recognise humanity as religion, the Mission is all for it.

Certainly, the Mission has no political complexion or ambition. It does not, however, advise its followers to be cut off from the society. They must act and behave like responsible citizens. The Mission aims at the spiritual and

moral uplift of mankind, without having for it any political objective or a link with any political organisation. It centers round the relationship between human being and God. Its message is addressed to the hearts and not to the body.

The Mission believes in God, who is one, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, eternal, formless, a non-psychic objective reality and perceivable. God is distinct from celestial bodies such as sun, moon, stars; earthly elements such as earth, water, fire; and subtle elements such as air, ether and *jeeva*. These nine elements constitute the entire creation and are distinguishable from the tenth, the All-pervading Divine Spirit, which creates, sustains and regulates the whole universe. This aspect of cosmos has been termed as 'Nirankar' (Formless God), though invisible to the physical eye yet all-pervading and visible to the inner vision. In fact what we see is unreal as it decays and dies. But what we do not see is reality because out of that invisible power the visible comes into existence. The changeless in the changing physical world is called God and the changeless in the changing human body is called the Soul. The one who experiences it is known as 'Nirankari'. The sole aim of the Mission is to impart the knowledge of Nirankar to the seeker's soul. Hence its name: 'The Sant Nirankari Mission'.

IDEOLOGY

PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

Ever since the advent of mankind, progress made by human civilization, directly or indirectly, centres round two things: Science of Life and Philosophy of Life. The anatomy of body has been studied to such an extent that now one can withstand diseases and live a healthier life. The comforts and pleasures that scientific progress has added to human life can well be imagined from our daily life experience. The human being is now able to fly in the air like a bird and swim in the sea like a fish.

Philosophy of life aims at making human being live on earth like a human being worth the name. On July 17, 1975 the American Apollo and the Soviet Soyuz spaceships linked up in orbit and the commanders of the two ships held their historic 'hand-shake in space'. What is actually needed is the affectionate 'hand-shake on earth' between one human being and the other. It is this philosophy of life which is the real and actual subject matter of the Sant Nirankari Mission. It deals with the spirit in human being and lays stress on the role of the individual.

It is the inter-relation and liaison of the individuals that go to constitute the human society. Who are these individuals? You and I. No power on earth can possibly fulfil the slogans of world peace and human brotherhood unless relations between You and I become smooth and sweet. The oneness of mankind is natural, divine and self sustaining. Any departure from this basic Truth is detrimental to the peace and

prosperity of humanity. The fulcrum of every world problem in reality lies in our own minds and hearts.

Far-reaching results would be achieved only by making a start at the nearest point, and that nearest point is our ownself. If each individual is at peace, the world at large would, automatically, be at peace. The Sant Nirankari Mission is applying this formula and correcting each individual with spiritual awakening or knowledge of God, with the ultimate aim of correcting the human society as a whole. No wonder, the Mission's message is synonymous with 'Universal Brotherhood' based on love, peace and understanding through spiritual awakening.

This is sought to be made possible by the Sant Nirankari Mission by revealing God- the Super Soul, to one's soul. The person so enlightened discovers that just as the space in a pot and the all-providing space are one and the same, irrespective of the pot's existence or destruction, so are the Pure Consciousness outside and the spirit within him or her. This is taught by the living Satguru whose preachings include both the rules to attain the ultimate goal of salvation through God-realisation and some rules for daily life. In the life of a Nirankari the filial love of God and God's fraternal love of the human being are one and inseparable. To immune oneself from egoistic propensities, the Nirankaris touch each other's feet. It is not a mere expression of regard but it also signifies utter humility, the source of perennial joy.

Taking an example from day-to-day life, a boy

witnessing a fair is all joy so long as he is holding his father's finger. Every sight brightens his face. He enjoys eating sweets, seeing the circus and tableaux. But engrossed in some scene, in case the child gets apart from his father, he feels quite forlorn and helpless. He becomes restless and cries bitterly. All the colour and glamour of the fair fall flat on him. He feels as if the animals in the circus are out to swallow him. His joy will be restored only when he is reunited with his father. Likewise, a devotee, linked with the Lord, and relying on the Almighty, relishes all the activities of the world as pleasant experiences. Apparently, one is totally absorbed in them, but actually this is not so. One is self-conscious from within and is tied fast to the apron-strings of the True Master to keep his or her divine spark aglow at all costs.

Why God?

Trying to live superhumanly, mankind is found sunk in sub-humanity. In the absence of spirituality, every individual appears to be suffering from psychological blindness and the mankind as a whole can be likened to a ship without rudder caught in the grip of waves of tempestuous sea.

Sharing the notable life experience of some renowned personages of the world, one of the greatest modern psychologists, Sir Jung has described in his book, 'Modern Man in Search of Soul', that among all his patients, there had not been even one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. Another noted psychologist of London,

Dr. Hadfield also shares his experience the same way when he says that he attempted to cure his nervous patients with suggestions of quietness and confidence but without success until he linked those suggestions on to their faith in the power of God.

The modern man has no time to think of God, but with all his plans and grand schemes for development, there is at the bottom an emptiness and yearning for peace. Great thinker Augustine of Hippo writes, "Restless are our souls until they rest in Thee, my God." He further adds, "There are plenty of people who are dead without knowing God." Noted philosopher Dr. S. Radhakrishnan brings out: "Irreligion is our malady and religion its only cure". Knowledge of God creates relationship of human being with the Creator. It is through this relation that an element of spirituality can be imparted to human thought and action. One's life is, therefore, incomplete without knowing God.

If a man loses faith in God, he loses faith in himself which spells crisis of character resulting in chaos and violence in the society. God-realisation gives a plastic turn to his character. It kills the five baser instincts- Lust, Anger, Greed, Passion and Pride, which are root cause of all human maladies. The fate touches the feet of the man with such a character.

WHERE IS GOD?

No questions whatsoever are raised when we say that God is omnipresent, existing all the time everywhere, pervading every particle of the universe, every object-animate or inanimate.

Several other identifying features of God are never disputed, such as: God is self-born, eternal, omniscient, colourless, shapeless and formless. But when it comes to where, we find people pointing towards the sky. Then, we find people visiting certain places of pilgrimage, certain shrines as if God exists only there and nowhere else beyond their boundaries.

The Mission considers this approach rather self-contradictory. If God is omnipresent, why should one point towards the sky only? Why should one confine the all-pervading power to a particular spot or boundaries of a place? It means we are not believing what we ourselves have said i.e., God is present all the time everywhere. To the Sant Nirankari Mission, therefore, God is THIS as well as THAT. God is HERE as well as THERE. There is no need to go anywhere else, if our object is only to know God, to realise God and to know where God is.

GOD REALISATION

The Mission believes that a human being comprises the earth, the water, the fire, the air and the ether, plus the Soul. The first five material constituents form the body, while the sixth represents the individual unit of consciousness. Whenever there is a deficiency of any of these five elements in the body, some sort of disease or disturbance takes place. However, the deficiency of one element cannot be made good by another. For example, the necessity of water cannot be met with by earth, fire, air or ether. Similarly, the lack of air cannot be replenished with water or ether and so on.

Exactly on the same pattern, no material elements can substitute the sixth i.e. the Soul or the individual unit of consciousness. To repeat, just as the deficiency of water cannot be made good with an intake of any other material element, the lack of knowledge of cosmic consciousness on the part of Soul too cannot be made good with any amount of material gains whatsoever.

The first question that arises here is: Why does the Soul suffer from this lack of knowledge of cosmic consciousness? Human soul comes from the Super-Soul, i.e. God. The Formless Almighty is its source. God is omnipresent and all-pervading. Then, why should the Soul fail to realise it? The trouble arises because it fails to identify itself with God. Instead, it associates itself with Body, which happens to be guided and controlled by the Mind and the Intellect. Consequently, the Soul finds itself more inclined towards the Creation instead of the Creator and suffers from the cloak of ignorance that seems to be taking it away from God, who is otherwise very much present.

In such a situation, the unreal becomes the real and the Real becomes unreal. The veil of ignorance keeps the Soul bewildered and human life dominated by materialism. Individuals enter the mad race for worldly possessions. They get so entangled in their pursuit that they find it difficult to come out or liberate themselves. Instead, they become a victim of ego that produces hatred and violence. As a consequence, the distance between one individual and the other continues to increase. The noble feelings

of love, peace and tolerance tend to disappear. There is no humility, no sympathy, no fellow-feeling. One becomes narrow-minded and selfish and service to others becomes nobody's concern.

The Mission is of the opinion that in order to bring one human being closer to the other the distance between the human being and God must be removed first. Naturally, this requires the false veil of ignorance to be removed from the human Soul so that it can behold, recognise and meet its source, the Super-Soul, God. Once God is realised by Soul, once it discovers the Truth and is face to face with it, righteousness, purity and nobleness take on rather drive away all the false and evil forces dominating human life hitherto. The darkness of ignorance having automatically gone on the advent of Divine Light, ill-will gives place to goodwill, hatred to love, discord to tolerance and so on. All apprehensions and delusions disappear and life becomes as clean, pure and sublime as Divinity itself. The human being surrenders to the will of God, relinquishing all claims as a doer and the owner, trusting fully well that the outcome whatsoever shall be truthful and pleasant.

While on the subject, let us understand if there is any difference between Self-Realisation and God-realisation. The Mission believes that what matters is the dismantlement of the artificial and false cloak or the curtain that keeps the Soul separated from the ever-existing Super-Soul, the Almighty. Once the Divine Light descends and the darkness vanishes, the Soul can see all that surrounds it. Within the Body, it may perceive the 'Self', realising at the same

time its linkage with God (beyond). However, since the communion of the Soul and Super-Soul is full and final, the consideration of 'Self' too stands dissolved and merged completely with that of God. If at all, 'Self' is a tiny mirror in which the Soul can see an equally small image of the Vast and Boundless entity, i.e. God. In fact, the realisation of God takes into its fold the realisation of Self in such a manner that the latter ceases to be significant, rather chooses to merge its entity deliberately and happily with the Supreme entity, i.e. God. The spark is now the part of the Flame, the drop is already immersed in the Ocean. Why go after the spark or the drop, when the full flame is there, the entire ocean is there!

SELF CONCIOUSNESS

The human being is incessantly motivated and propelled by two inevitable impulses namely, repulsion to sorrow and a craving for joy. Mother loves the child not for the sake of the child but for the sake of the joy that the child can give to her. Truth is that one loves oneself the most.

We may enquire what is that 'self' in us which we love the most. In this body if a situation arises to arrange expenses of Rs. 30,000/- to save amputation of our leg, we beg or borrow to save our leg. If a choice is given on another occasion to amputate a leg or prick both eyes, our choice shall be certainly to sacrifice the leg. That is, if a choice is between an organ of action and an organ of knowledge, our preference will always be to maintain the organ of knowledge at the sacrifice of that of action. Again, supposing

our organ of knowledge, say ear, is severely paining due to an ulcer in it and if the doctor says that by an operation the pain, the disturbance in our mind, can be ended at the cost of the ear, the patient's choice would be to sacrifice the organ of knowledge for the sake of much more intimate and beloved entity in us, i.e., the mind. Certainly, it is now clear that the mind is more beloved to us than even a sense-organ.

We also know the men who suffered privations and lived through the agonizing whip of the tyrants only to uphold their ideals. Thus, between the intellectual ideologies and the mental sufferings, a cultured man will always choose the satisfaction of intellect. We love and adore our intellect more than our mind.

To conclude, 'Self Consciousness', the very source of life, because of which the intellect, the mind and the body seem to be potent and active, is the factor most loved by us, because it is the source of our maximum joy. Thus, the Divine Spark that lies hidden in us for the sake of which we are ready to sacrifice in fact all the grosser envelopments about it, is indeed the cause for all rejoicing. When an aspirant comes to identify himself or herself with that, who can measure the joy that is his or her!

SCIENCE AND SPIRITUALITY

The Mission does not visualise any reason for contradiction between Science and Spirituality. On the other hand, it holds the firm view that all the achievements of science and technology shall make human life more and more beautiful,

comfortable and loveable, provided it is blended with the sublime human values based on spiritual enlightenment. Whereas the Mission welcomes all material achievements that have made life easier, faster and more comfortable, it does not approve of the on-going mad race for the building up of nuclear arsenals and for the amassing of all other kinds of arms and ammunition. Certainly, the Mission believes that the reason for different armed conflicts or incidents of violence may be any, but the outcome is the same i.e. loss of human life and destruction of property.

Even if we want to trace the genesis or the roots of conflict and violence, we shall find that they lie in human mind only. No weapon can prove dangerous or cause harm unless there is somebody's mind behind it. It is the human mind that makes it dangerous and harmful. A bad mind may turn even a boon of science into a curse of life.

Further, the Mission is of the opinion that it is not the gadget that matters most, it is the use that it is put to. And this depends on our own intention. Nuclear energy, for example, can go a long way to make life more and more comfortable, but it has the potential to annihilate humanity too. The choice is, of course, with mankind itself. The Mission here says that we must opt for making this earth more liveable rather than cause destruction. In short, all human endeavour should lead to the welfare of all and common good rather than trouble, tension, pain and sorrow.

All wars should, therefore, be tackled within rather than outside. The Mission is of the opinion that all efforts to suppress violence, eliminate weapons and bring peace will prove in vain until and unless the evil spirits of hatred and pride are removed from the minds.

Naturally, this can be achieved only by appealing to the conscience of the human being and changing the way of thinking before expecting any change in behaviour. By way of means to achieve this, the Mission seeks to make every human being spiritually awakened and adorned with Divine Knowledge so that he or she manages to rise above narrow considerations of selfishness, ego, hatred and jealousy and think in terms of human unity and universal brotherhood.

PEACE WITHIN

The Mission believes that mere wealth cannot and will not provide the possessor with real happiness and lasting peace. Acquisition of money is simply a means for comfortable living and not a goal in itself. When accumulation of wealth is pursued for the sake of happiness, one misses the goal and rather creates several problems for himself or herself. Some of the unhappiest persons are the millionaires. Money can give only material comforts but not the happiness. One can buy costly furniture but not the sleep. Sumptuous eatables can be purchased, but not the appetite. Wealth just cannot buy peace of mind. A person can remain most miserable despite all the comforts at his or her

disposal. In fact, one's real worth is known by what one is and not by what one has.

Decidedly, external world cannot guarantee internal peace. Even the most affluent have their moments of misery, sorrow and turbulence. Those who materially lack nothing in life, they also find themselves face to face with situations when they feel that they have lost everything. This is the moment when one seeks of that Power which he or she has been negating hitherto, blinded by the materialistic galore. One is reminded of the spiritual caution, "What shall it avail a man if he gains the whole world but loseth his own soul?"

There is no demarcation from where the richness starts or the poverty ends. However lower you may find yourself to be, there is always another who is still lower than you and vice-versa. Even when the richest man is asked to spot out his vast empire on the map of the world, the same cannot be compared with even a decimal point. Conversely, if we attain God realisation, the whole world would seem just a decimal point with reference to the All-pervading, the Boundless, the Formless God. Just imagine, how much rich and prosperous one feels on realising this truth. The whole world is bound to co-work with such spiritual person who feels one with the Creator of the whole world. It is only the God-realisation which provided the same divine bliss or peace within to saint Kabir earning two paise (takka) per day by weaving and Raja Janak who lived in royal palaces.

This brings us to what is described in spiritual

jargon as SEHAJ. This is the state of human mind where one does not feel elated on finding something and pained on losing it. One does not envy the more fortunate and frown at the less fortunate fellow beings. One is fully contented with what one has. In fact, the person feels grateful to the Supreme Donor, God, for whatever has been bestowed on him or her — physical strength, intellectual ability and material wealth. The lasting peace and joy within that flows from contentment is valued more than any worldly possession that would always fail to guarantee the same. This is the attitude that the Mission seeks to promote through spiritual enlightenment.

UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD

Though gregarious by nature, human beings stand completely divided. They do not mix up with each other freely. As a result, there is no mutual love and sympathy, hence no reciprocal respect. Lack of respect breeds distrust which ultimately culminates in hatred and consequent violence all around, alienating one human from the other. Loss of love is, therefore, the root cause of shocking crash of human values and it eventually erupts into the form of tension, discord and suffering. We notice shocking crash in human values both vertically and horizontally. One is bewildered as to what is going to become of the world. Disgusting occurrences are taking place in such a quick succession and so routinely that we are getting immunised even to registering the shocks.

To arrest all the human maladies, the Mission

says, we have to reverse the gear from violence to love and peace, by realizing the Fatherhood of God, the by-product of which is the spontaneous brother-hood of the mankind. Though God is invisible, yet it is all concrete, a cosmic force unifying the whole universe. The Nirankari Mission asserts that God-realisation is the only force that is mortar-binding together the many-shaped bricks of human society into one coherent structure. It vouchsafes that it is possible to realize the prospect of a world family with the unifying bond of love among its members in the wake of realisation of Fatherhood of God only. In fact, the apostles laboured hard, the martyrs died in torment, the scholars and the scientists proclaimed the beauties of higher life, the sociologists untiringly inculcated the sense of duties of good citizen, the philosophers pioneered sublime thoughts, and all agreed that God is one and that the first duty of a human being is to realize this Almighty. This is the key to what we describe as Universal Brotherhood.

With this Mission, Universal Brotherhood is not a hollow slogan, but a concrete, practical way of life. It is not a gospel merely to be preached by word, it is an essential part of the very conduct and behaviour of every Nirankari, who would feel at home in every part of the world. Nirankaris find themselves surrounded by their own fellow-beings, wherever they go. There is no stranger for them. For them this globe is one house and the mankind one family.

HUMAN UNITY

The realisation of God and one-ness of the

Formless Almighty leads us to the one-ness of humanity, the unity and fraternity of the mankind as children of the same Supreme Father, the Creator of the Universe. So, for the realisation of human unity and for the promotion of the spirit of universal brotherhood, what we require is the realisation of the Truth that God is the Supreme Creator, the sole creator of the universe, including the mankind. The Mission, of course, offers its forum to one and all to realise this Truth with the blessings of the True Master, the Satguru.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

The realisation of cosmic consciousness does not come in conflict with one's existing religious faith or political ideology. The Mission emphasizes that it is the prime purpose of every human being to realize God irrespective of his or her cultural and socio-economic background. This spells out 'unity in diversity'. The unity is of knowledge of God, diversity being that of different cultures, languages and ideological systems. God realisation acts as a cementing force inspiring love, amity, fellow-feeling, humility and selfless service, and encouraging us to be compassionate, open-minded and large-hearted enough to understand and appreciate others' view-points, as also to respect and honour all, whatever their faith and the belief.

This way, the widespread alienation between one human being and the other is abridged. They come closer by understanding and appreciating each other's view-point, faith and philosophy which, in turn, are discovered to be

like the petals of the same flower emitting the same fragrance.

Understanding and imbibing of human values are as significant as anything else. Our civilization which is a civilization of machine can teach us everything except how to be a human being. The spiritual Nirankari Mission has undertaken this task to teach human being, to be a Human Being.

The Mission goes on to explain that the entire mankind can stay as a single global family notwithstanding all kinds of diversities. In fact the way of living, including the food and dress habits, is bound to vary from region to region because it is dictated by the local climate which is never the same for all the parts of the world. Some people confuse the word 'unity' with the word 'uniformity'. Uniformity generally relates to our appearance and may never be achieved. Truly speaking, the Mission holds, we should never try to impose or prescribe any kind of uniformity because it is just not possible. On the other hand we must emphasize on the fundamental unity that springs from the Fatherhood of God for all human beings. Nirankaris do not believe in outward unity or sameness like an orange which is totally segregated inside. Rather they are like a melon which despite having outwardly fragmented appearance is completely one inside.

RELIGION FOR ALL

If one can easily acknowledge the concept of one God for all, it should not be difficult to accept the idea of one religion of mankind, a religion that can suit the whole human race.

The Nirankari Mission has succeeded in achieving this end through a living revelation of the all-pervading God, the same for all religious faiths, ignoring the non-essential rituals which are different for different faiths. Nirankari Missionaries quote from the holy books of all faiths known to the world because they recognize the truth which is common to all. For this reason people from all faiths have readily accepted the teachings of the Mission.

With the help of the divine knowledge bestowed by the True Master, an enlightened person perceives God in all and all in God. He or she regards every human being the creation of God. With true love and faith thus developed, one starts loving and serving fellow-beings in the real sense. A compass of righteousness is fitted in the heart of the seeker which always keeps him or her in the right direction; there is no suspense and superstition.

When spiritualism takes the place of ritualism, one follows and observes the golden tenet, "All to give all for all". Conversely, one believes that all one's assets, material and mental, belong to God, and we, as trustees only, are ordained to use them for common good of whole human race. This spells a living above narrow prejudices and dogmas of caste, colour, creed, etc. Thereby one becomes respectful towards others' mode of dress, diet and culture, and leads a purposeful life. The physical distance between any two places can be covered by any mode of conveyance, but the distance among the hearts of persons living even under the same roof can be covered only by realising fatherhood of God which brings them

,the bond of human relationship making us firmly awakened that we are all one belonging to the One.

The Mission would like to describe this as 'religion for all'. The world, the Mission feels, needs to understand the basic spiritual message, the message of God, of truth, of love as professed by the great masters and enshrined in holy scriptures. This is what the Mission seeks to promote. It helps seekers of truth to know God, perceive the Omnipresent and understand our relationship with the Creator, have faith in the Almighty, surrender to the Divine will and obey the commands of God. It explains that the human being is God's own image on earth. God dwells in every human body and, therefore, it is easy to worship the Almighty through the service of mankind. So, why not accept and adopt 'humanity' as religion, the only religion!

GOD AND THE GUIDE

Many would chant the poetic descriptions of God enshrined in the holy scriptures. They would even worship them, equating them with God. Evidently, such people are convinced of what they seek to preach or communicate. They realise that what the holy scriptures say is 'Truth'. The Mission too holds these scriptures in high esteem. It describes these religious books as the most valuable part of our legacy inherited from the great spiritual masters of the past. They contain the principles that these great masters not only preached among their contemporaries but practised in their day-to-day life and thus proved their efficacy. Time has also upheld their

truth-fulness. No wonder, their message continues to hold relevance even today, notwithstanding the fact that the same were written centuries ago.

The Mission, however, holds that all our respect and reverence for the holy scriptures and the saints, Gurus and prophets who wrote them will remain hollow and in vain, if we confine our effort merely to their reading and reciting and do not act upon what they enjoin or advise. It points out that today God is different for different persons and different for the same person on different occasions, because instead of realising God, as enshrined in the holy scripture of our faith, we are stuck up on the name only. And there are as many names of God as there are kaleidoscopic variety of the Divine traits experienced by the saints down the ages. What actually matters is the substance and not mere name. Names can be many even for one person or an article.

Almost all holy scriptures are of the opinion that only an enlightened Soul can help another soul to realise the Super-Soul, God, whose omnipresence has been accepted by one and all. People do find this principle enshrined in the scriptures of their faith. They do read, recite and chant the relevant hymns. But they forget that the great masters who wrote them sought the world to follow and act upon them. The Mission seeks to remind them of this truth. It holds the opinion that if one claims to have faith in a particular religious book and the great master who wrote it, he or she must exhibit and prove the same through his or her conduct, act upon

what is proclaimed to be believed. Mere saying or repeating that God can be realised only with the blessings of the True Master, is not sufficient. We must act and approach the True Master. This is how the son of God, Jesus Christ, does speak:-

" I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, THE LIFE.
NONE CAN COMETH UNTO THE FATHER, BUT
BY ME."

(Jesus Christ)

Lord Krishna stresses the same thing:-

"ASK HIM WHO KNOWS ME;
BOW TO HIM IN RESPECT AND HE WILL
UNVEIL TO YOU MY REAL FACE."

(The Bhagwad Gita)

Hazrat Mohammad shares the same view:-

"IS KE RASOOL PAR IMAN LAO,
HAQ SE MIL JAOGHE."

(The Holy Quran)

(Trust His Messenger and you will be one with the Truth)

Similarly, Gurbani says:-

"KAHO NANAK GUR BIN NAHIN SUJHE,
HAR SAJAN SABH KE NIKAT KHARA."

(The Adi-Granth)

(God is everywhere, close to all, but can not be realized without the help of the True Master.)

Tulsidas also proclaims:-

"GURU BIN BHAVNIDHI TARAIYE NA KOI
JYON BIRANCHI SHANKAR SAM HOI."

(Ram Charit Manas)

(Man may be as exalted as Lord Brahma or Lord Shiva, even he cannot swim across the

ocean of materialism without the benevolence of the True Master.)

All holy scriptures lead us to believe that there can be no worship without God, and there can be no God without the Guide. In fine, all great masters and scriptures have laid down that the only way to realize the omni-present God is to sit in faith before a living Divine Master who can make you realize the all-pervading God in a matter of seconds.

Just as a man in fact is not his physical appearance i.e. hands, feet, mouth etc. but is his soul which makes the body function, similarly, the Divine Master is not the body but the divine knowledge which is revealed and imparted through his body. Therefore, the divine knowledge of God-Nirankar is not possible without the kindness of a living Guide (Satguru). Such a holyman does never attach himself to any particular religious faith, community or caste, the truth being that such personages have always appeared for the benefit of the whole mankind and not for any community or country.

There prevails a great deal of misconception about a True Master or Satguru, especially his hallmark and his manifestation. Times without number it is asserted and propagated that to realize God is an obligation as also a birth right, nay a divine right of every human being in whichever age he or she is born. As a doctor is indispensable to dispense medicine, so is the True Master for dispensing God Knowledge. Is it logical that there should not be a True Master in any age? Those who contend that

manifestation of a True Master is a rare phenomenon, should honestly search their hearts: Are they not depriving the teeming millions to realize God and be redeemed? Since the Divine Truth is eternal, so is the Divine Messenger or True Master to bless the aspirants with the Divine message or God-Knowledge in every age. A True Master is not a person but an institution and God-Knowledge his sole hallmark.

The divine experience can never be had by any other means. The True Master remains a vital link between God and the human being, being the only communicator of the Divine Truth. He does not boast of anything nor believes in the performance of miracles. The True Master's sole mission is to communicate the message of truth and light to the whole mankind. He may himself lead a normal family life and not require others to renounce the world in search of Truth. The only distinctive feature to recognize the True Master is that he can reveal the Omni-present Formless God instantaneously.

It will be relevant to mention here that the people at large are enchanted by occult powers and miracles instead of God-Knowledge and regard the former and not the latter as the mark of a True Master. There are also some persons who do believe in the necessity of the True Master but they venture to find him with strange tests. They ignore the real goal of life -God Realisation, and look out for a Master who can meet their worldly requirements. When such persons see the gain elsewhere, they tilt the balance like a shuttle-cock. Materialism is the summum-bonum of their life.

It is, however, an established fact that worldly wealth just cannot produce lasting peace for the mind and joy for the heart, which can be found only at the holy feet of the True Master. And this is not a hollow slogan here. The Satguru in this Mission bestows enduring peace on the mind of the seeker by establishing his or her communion with God. Satguru lays stress on character building and leading a pious life worth emulating by others. The devotee thus leads a life of complete identification with God and shows deepest regards and respect for all the past spiritual masters and the scriptures. After seeking the blessings of the Nirankari Baba, one does not take much time to realise the truthfulness of what he or she had been reading in the holy scripture of his or her faith about God and the Guide. The seeker finds himself or herself liberated from all rituals. Mere reading and reciting of holy scriptures, undertaking pilgrimages, sitting in penance by the side of fire or water, seeking seclusion, observing fasts and becoming ascetic, all cease to have relevance, since the True Master has revealed the Truth and united the seeker with the Formless on all-the-time-everywhere basis. The Satguru has bestowed on him or her the Light as also the Vision.

Although the Nirankaris would hold the Satguru in highest esteem and show for his Godly qualities the same reverence as they have for God, he himself shall never claim superiority. On the other hand, right from its founder Baba Buta Singh Ji down to His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj, every Head of the Mission has

described himself as 'humblest of the humble' (Dass).

FIVE PRINCIPLES

Forgetfulness of God is the cause of all human ills. Conversely, God-realisation is panacea for all maladies. This Mission, therefore, primarily has one point programme of treating the suffering humanity with the practical knowledge of God. As we do not find two swords in one sheath; pride and hatred cannot co-exist with God-realisation. Therefore, just as even the best treatment cannot prove effective unless the prescribed precautions are observed, the Mission has prescribed five basic principles for seekers of Truth to wipe out self-pride and hatred against others, which are dominating factors negating realisation of God. Any person with swollen ego can never enjoy proper divine bliss. Therefore, in order to inculcate humility and love in all the devotees, the Nirankari Mission has formulated five principles for adoption in every day life. They are:

i) All the physical, mental and material possessions of the human being belong ultimately to God. If the human being uses the same as a trustee, conscious of the divine order, he or she shall not be afflicted by the disease of ego and pride and shall always derive happiness. One must understand that all one's worldly assets are mere shadow and all that is visible is false and not permanent. Once this is realised and followed, it removes all kinds of arrogance and false pride born out of the sense of possession of worldly assets. Instead, it inculcates the spirit

of selflessness and sacrifice for others. It generates contentment and stability. One does not feel jubilant when fortune smiles, nor does one sulk when fortune frowns. As nothing belongs to the human being, he or she does not get lost in the mad maze of mammon with its attendant evils. One becomes free from malice and hatred. One loves all and feels grateful to God for whatever has been bestowed on him or her.

ii) Not to be proud of one's caste, creed, race and colour and not to hate others on this account. Being the creation of the same Almighty, a human being should be loved as such, and not as a follower of a particular religious faith. Somebody's faith in a particular way of worship should not become a reason for hatred towards him or her. Truth is one and the same. Then, why should the seekers quarrel or fight? They should rather love each other and co-exist in a spirit of equality and fraternity. Religion, whatever its nomenclature, should unite and not divide them. In no way it should become a reason to be proud. One should appreciate that all human beings are the creation of the same Almighty. Once this is understood, the very basis or reason for discrimination, particularly religious intolerance, will disappear.

iii) Not to look down upon anybody because of his or her mode of dress and diet and not to be proud of one's own way of life. In a way, when one rises above religious ideologies and faiths, he or she should have no problem in tolerating differences in dress, food habits and other modes

of living which are dictated by climatic conditions that vary from region to region. One may eat, drink and wear what one likes. But he or she should have no objection if others choose to go by their choice and it happens to be different. Moreover, one must not dictate one's own choice to others. One should not be proud of one's own food and dress habits, because God can be realised only after shedding all kinds of pride.

iv) Not to leave one's hearth and home and become a vagrant, recluse or ascetic but to lead normal family life, earn honest livelihood and become no burden on others. God can be realised while performing normal duties of daily life. In fact, one should not run away from one's responsibilities towards self, the family and society at large, on the pretext of search for the Ultimate Truth. One does not require to renounce the world for spiritual enlightenment. One must, however, trust the Almighty and treat all ups and down of life as divine will.

v) Not to deviate from and divulge to others the Divine Knowledge as revealed by the Satguru, without a word from him. For spiritual enlightenment one must approach and seek the blessings of the Spiritual Master, the Satguru. Truth can be revealed only by the one who knows it. Even thereafter one should not divulge the knowledge of the Formless God to anyone without the word of the Satguru. This is to save an ordinary devotee from embarrassment, because every student cannot become a teacher. He or she must acquire an in-depth understanding before being called upon to bless

the new comers with the realisation of the Ultimate Truth.

With these principles at heart and God all around, a Nirankari is a guiding star for the world by the practical life he or she lives. These principles enable the devotees to lead a simple life, balanced and worthy of a human being. All the differences, controversies and quarrels are rooted in implicit or explicit pride and ego which is uprooted through these principles. The Mission thus seeks to ensure individual development as well as welfare and progress of the society as a whole.

SPIRITUAL STEADFASTNESS

Although the above principles are more of a supplementary measure to God Knowledge just as a doctor would advise the patient to follow certain guidelines in order to take full advantage of the treatment, permitting no unwanted factor to interrupt the health-gaining process, the devotee treats them as his or her 'pledge' towards steadfastness. The devotee is convinced that this is the only and the best way to keep himself or herself happy in the given worldly environment, where spiritually enlightened persons are also likely to be surrounded by many others who have not been equally fortunate.

The Mission, however, goes one step further to help the devotee to remain firm and steadfast in devotion to God and a conduct based on spiritual enlightenment towards fellow-beings. It suggests that even after attaining God-Knowledge, the devotee should seek the company of saints

or fellow-devotees (Satsang). This will serve as a constant source of moral strength required for complete and full submission to the will of God. Moreover, it will strengthen his or her integration with the Almighty through constant remembrance of God (Simran). And, above all, it will keep on inspiring him or her to be helpful to others, to render selfless service (Sewa).

Thus, the five principles of the Mission with the added golden triangle of Satsang, Simran and Sewa, makes the devotee transcend from 'self' and find God dwelling in every human being. It makes him or her tolerant, humble and modest in behaviour towards others and firm in devotion to God. Devotees develop a sense of reverence specially for those who are spiritually enlightened. One Nirankari bows to another simply to show respect to the Gyan or God-Knowledge he or she has attained from the True Master. Everybody here is convinced that we must please the children of God, if we want to please the Almighty, the Creator.

CONVERSION ?

The Mission believes that after God-realisation all individuals can live as world citizens, as members of the same global family, having belief in one Formless God. In the eyes of God, no one is high or low and there is no discrimination on grounds of caste, colour, creed or status. The outward disparities and symbols are man-made, superficial and hence of no consequence in the realm of spiritualism.

Unfortunately the word 'religion' today has

been taken to mean a set of rites and rituals. It is identified with such factors as may distinguish its followers from others. The Mission would, however, like to value and stick to the basic truth that brings us closer to each other as human beings. So, it welcomes the seeker of Truth without attaching any importance to his or her religious faith, caste or community. Neither does it ask the seeker to detach himself or herself from his or her faith and become an 'apostate'.

In fact, the Mission addresses itself to the seeker's conscience without raising queries and associates his or her mind with God. What it seeks to achieve for its followers is Divine Knowledge or God-Realisation. There is no question of 'conversion' in the sense of the word's meaning known to the world. It is another thing that once the truth about the Kingdom of God is unfolded to a person, he or she may not feel like going back to the dark world of superstition, ignorance and ritualism. To them now, every human being is the image of God and every place a holy place.

Moreover, the Mission treats the various religious scriptures as a precious treasure of God-Knowledge. Coming from the great spiritual masters, they explain their philosophy with requisite authenticity and go a long way to help us understand what they sought to preach and practise. The Mission's emphasis is, however, on practical approach to the teachings of the saints, Gurus and prophets of the past. After God-realisation, one worships God by obeying the divine will and not merely by reciting the

Divine Name. The stress here is not on what one reads or worships, but on what one follows. The Mission is of the opinion that a person cannot be a true follower of any religious faith unless he or she acts on the teachings of the spiritual master he or she believes in and the principles enunciated in the holy scripture he or she reads and worships.

DEVOTION

The Sant Nirankari Mission first introduces man to God and then leaves it to him or her to lead a godly life. According to the Mission, total surrender to God after knowing the Almighty is true devotion. All else is simply means to arouse the urge to know God. The Mission holds that devotion is not a means to know God, but having known God it is a way of life for the devotee ever expressing his or her heart-felt gratitude for the Divine bounties. Such a devotion is not subjected to the limitations of rituals, time or place. To the Nirankaris, knowledge of God is not the end, but the beginning of devotion. The God so known is understood, accepted and used in day-to-day life by the Nirankaris.

DHAN NIRANKAR

Once a devotee is blessed with Divine Light, he or she looks at God first and everything else later. To a devotee, all human beings are God's creation and all worldly objects Divine bounties. One finds God all around, Transcendent, omnipresent, all-pervading. And at the same time, one finds God Immanent, every object the Almighty has created. So, while remembering

God all the time at all places in all circumstances, the devotee utters 'Ik Tu Hi Nirankar' (Thou Formless One) and these very words take the form of Simran-repeated and constant remembrance of God.

'Ik Tu Hi Nirankar' has its own significance. The first thing sought to be emphasised is that God is One (Ik), neither more nor less than one, whatever the name. Secondly, God is Formless (Nirankar)-omnipresent, all-pervading, but subtle and sublime, to be seen only with an abstract eye. And thirdly, like Second Person of English grammar (Tu), God is always present before us and we can address the Almighty face to face.

No wonder, even while greeting others, a Nirankari would like to say 'Dhan Nirankar' (Hail the Formless God). It means the devotee seeks to welcome the Formless in the person he or she meets and eulogise only God in his or her 'auspicious' company.

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CONGREGATIONS AND SAMAGAMS

THE SIKH RELIGION
AND
THE SIKH COMMUNITY

CONGREGATIONS

Congregation is, in fact, the life-force of a devotee and it is the driving-force behind the Mission. In the Congregation, one maintains spiritual touch with God and this in itself helps spreading the message of the Mission to others. The Nirankari congregation is an embodiment of unity in diversity where people of diverse regions, religious faiths and beliefs get together to sing praise of God. It is common platform for whole of humanity where every earnest aspirant can be blessed with God Knowledge. The message of the Mission is, therefore, spread primarily by holding congregations in the villages as also in the various parts of the towns and cities. The congregations are held at Nirankari Bhawans, wherever they exist. At times, individual members are encouraged to host congregations, which involve least fanfare. The stress is more on getting together, sharing the experience and, of course, praising God and the True Master. The message of the Mission is explained here with special reference to the requirements of the new comers.

Ordinarily, such congregations are presided over by the 'Mukhi' or 'Parmukh' (Head of a Branch) duly authorized by His Holiness. In his absence, however, any 'devotee' may perform this duty. The presiding saint symbolises the presence of the True Master, the Head of the Mission and is, therefore, shown the same kind of reverence.

There are a number of Parcharaks (Preachers) who are required to tour the various parts of the country, and address congregations to be

organized by the respective Branches. They are mostly authorized to unfold the spiritual message or God-Knowledge to the seekers, on behalf of His Holiness, the Nirankari Baba. Most of the Mukhis/Pramukhs also function as Parcharaks.

The Nirankari congregation has the distinction of giving an opportunity to every devotee to express his or her views in the form of speech, poem or song etc. even in the presence of His Holiness. It is believed that a spiritually enlightened person will speak nothing but 'sweet words'. They will be for goodwill, love and peace. There will be nothing offending or objectionable in them. Therefore, let the sweet words come from every heart, from every soul. The result is that the message of the Mission gets communicated in the language that is spoken and understood by the devotees present in the congregation. It is rarely that the views of a visiting missionary may be required to be interpreted in the local language. Since the message of the Mission is quite easy to understand, the speakers find no problem while communicating the same. The way of presentation is, however, one's own. In bigger congregations called Samagams, the various speakers are encouraged to use their own regional or local language. This does not only strengthen what we call unity in diversity but also promotes linguistic harmony.

WOMEN'S CONGREGATIONS

Both in the organisational and missionary activities, women are held in high esteem. In fact, the Mission makes no discrimination on

the basis of sex. A large number of women have been assigned managerial responsibilities in India and abroad. The missionaries (Pracharaks) among them tour far and wide. No doubt, women's congregations are organised regularly, these Pracharaks address general congregations as well and enjoy equal reverence from devotees everywhere. Women speakers, poets and singers are encouraged in every congregation and Samagam. Even in Sewa Dal women volunteers' services are as much appreciated as those of their male counterparts.

Ever since Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji became the Head of the Mission in 1962, his esteemed spouse Nirankari Rajmata Kulwant Kaur Ji had been working for the Mission shoulder to shoulder with Baba Ji. The Divine couple undertook long and hectic spiritual tours in India and abroad. Even today Rajmata Ji continues to be a source of inspiration and motherly affection to the devotees. She graces the dais along with the present Divine couple Satguru Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj and Pujya Mata Swinder Ji.

Pujya Mata Swinder Ji is also a source of strength for the sense of devotion of every Nirankari. She feels delighted to work shoulder to shoulder with His Holiness. Whenever some people come to see Baba Ji and seek his blessings, she is there to shower the motherly affection. She would look after the visitors as any devoted housewife would do in the case of close relatives and important guests. Pujya Mata Ji remains an important source of inspiration for the younger generation. She has her own pleasant way to

attract them towards the Mission and persuade them to take part in the various activities rising above all kinds of worldly considerations normally baffling our youth.

CHILDREN'S CONGREGATIONS

The Mission ardently wishes that the light of divine knowledge should continue to glow from generation to generation. For this it lays special emphasis on the establishment of children's congregations so that they should imbibe saintly traits such as love, humility, harmony, spirit of co-operation and self-less service for the benefit of the whole society.

The Mission claims that while fulfilling the material needs of the children, it is essentially required to equip them with righteous thought. In the absence of purity in thought and action, we cannot anticipate any fundamental long-term improvement in the human society. The primary stress is, therefore, on the character building of children. The Mission has its Children's Congregations (Bal Sangat) with headquarters in Chandigarh. There are over 600 functional units of children's congregation in India and abroad. To ensure their spiritual development the children themselves organise their congregations, Samagams, symposia, seminars, competitions, camps, etc.

SATSANG BHAWANS

There was a time when the devotees in a town could hold their congregations in drawing rooms. The position, however, changed with the passage of time. With the tremendous increase

in Nirankari devotees at various places, the necessity of constructing independent accommodation for daily, weekly or periodical congregations began to be felt very badly. Accordingly, it was decided to build congregation houses (Satsang Bhawans) at selected places for use by devotees.

By now, big cities and towns in India have the branches of the Mission with suitable Bhawans. Proper Bhawans exist at several places in UK, USA and Canada also. Though the need of such Bhawans is badly felt at many other places, yet it has not been possible to keep pace with the requirements because the number of followers of the Mission is increasing day by day.

Sant Nirankari Satsang Bhawans are open to one and all without any discrimination of caste, colour or race, whether one is rich, poor, literate or illiterate. The preachings of the Mission are of universal character and it is but natural that people in search of Truth should have magnetic attraction to approach these Bhawans without hesitation of any kind. The seekers feel all the more happy when they practically see the Nirankari congregations at Bhawans comprising of persons from all walks of life.

SAMAGAMS

ANNUAL SAMAGAMS

The then Head of the Mission, Baba Avtar Singh Ji lost his son, Sajjan Singh in 1948. The death of young Sajjan moved everybody and a

large number of devotees reached Delhi to express their feeling. His Holiness, however, impressed upon them all that we must surrender to the will of God. We should treat the body, mind and worldly belongings as gifts from the Almighty Nirankar, use them as trustees and feel in no way pained if and when any one of them is withdrawn or taken back by the Supreme Giver. Baba Ji counselled all to sit in congregation, remember God, express gratitude for whatever is left, pray for strength to serve humanity and beseech forgiveness or divine mercy for worldly short-comings.

As the Missionaries rose one after the other, to address the congregation it was discovered that it would be really useful to share their views on the Mission's philosophy, their experience as also the style of communicating the same, on a periodical basis. It was, therefore, decided that all Missionaries and interested devotees may assemble in Delhi at least once in a year in the month of October or November. No particular dates were, however, fixed to save it from becoming a mere ritual. Ever since, the Mission has been holding its Samagams every year regularly. The numbers of participants in the 3-day Annual Samagam, including those from outside India has already crossed 300,000. Experience shows that the gathering continues to be thicker and thicker from year to year.

To-day, the annual Nirankari Sant Samagam in Delhi can easily be described as the "Mission in Action". Its message of human unity, equality and fraternity based on spiritual awakening finds

here a fine expression. People from all shades and layers of society assemble at one place forgetting their social, economic or official status. The mammoth gathering presents a view of unity in diversity and mutual love, respect and understanding. Humility marks the conduct of every devotee participating in the Samagam so much so that one is found touching the feet of the other irrespective of the age, sex or the status.

Free food (Langar) is served to all during the Samagam. The people sit on the carpets so affectionately that one finds senior officers, businessmen, factory owners and other elite taking food while seated by the side of the common people coming from remote rural areas. Even those who prepare or serve the food work shoulder to shoulder irrespective of their social status, educational qualifications, economic background and so on. The Nirankari Langar is certainly an example of equality and fraternity as also the self-less service to others.

During the Samagam, the Nirankari Pradarshini- an Exhibition consisting of interesting models, paintings, photographs etc. is also a centre of attraction for the devotees. It depicts not only the history and the ideology of the Mission but also the various activities, particularly those related to the spread of its message. The spiritual tours and the discourses of His Holiness also find ample representation in the Exhibition. The long queues display the sense of discipline on the part of the devotees.

State-level or Regional Samagams are also

organized in different towns on annual or once in two years basis. Like in Delhi, His Holiness presides over these Samagams. These Samagams enable the followers in the area concerned to see Babaji, listen to him and seek his blessings. Such Samagams at Bombay and Calcutta and in the States of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Bihar, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana have already become quite popular.

BHAKTI PARV

This Samagam is held in the month of January every year. Initially it was an occasion to recall the example of self-less service rendered by a distinguished devotee, Santokh Singh, for a big reservoir near Nirankari Colony in Delhi which was subsequently named after him as Santokh Sarovar. Today Bhakti Parv commemorates the memory of all those missionaries who dedicated their life to the service of the Mission and spread its voice of Truth till last breath.

MANAV EKTA DIWAS

Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji who became the Head of the Mission in 1962, took it to new heights. He undertook long and hectic tours, opened new branches, set up Satsang Bhawans and appointed a net-work of missionaries to spread the message of the Mission. This attracted the wrath of the orthodox fanatics who made Baba Ji personally the target of their violence. After escaping several attacks, Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji fell to their bullets in Delhi on April

24, 1980. This was quite unprecedented and too big a shock to be absorbed by the followers of the Mission all over the world. On this day, they must, therefore, recall Baba Ji's martyrdom and pay their grateful homage.

However, as the day approached in 1981, His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji declared that it would be observed as Human Unity Day (Manav Ekta Diwas). The description drew its significance from the fact that it was for this noble cause of human unity, the central theme of the Mission's philosophy, that Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji lived and laid down his life. The day was also dedicated to all those devotees who laid down their lives while serving this cause from the Mission's forum.

As per the wishes of Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj, Blood Donation Camps have also been organised at many places in the country and abroad on the occasion of the 'Manav Ekta Samagam' every year, since 1987.

MUKTI PARV

The Mukti Parv Samagam is held on the 15th of August every year. While the country celebrates the Independence Day, the Mission adds another dimension to the day's significance that is, spiritual liberation of humanity. It is of the opinion that just as political freedom is essential for socio-economic progress, spiritual liberation is necessary for lasting peace and real happiness. Similarly, just as the country pays tributes with gratitude to the great sons of India who laid down their lives for the sake of Independence, the Mission recalls the services

of those who devoted their life to the spiritual awakening of the fellow beings, particularly from the forum of the Mission.

Initially, the devotees assembled to pay tributes to Jagat Mata Budhwanti Ji, the esteemed spouse of Nirankari Baba Avtar Singh Ji, who breathed her last on this day in 1964. Subsequently, when Baba Avtar Singh Ji himself left the mortal frame on September 17, 1969, this Samagam became an occasion for the devotees to express their gratitude to him also. At present Mukti Parv Samagams are held at various places throughout India and abroad to commemorate the memory of hundreds of Missionaries and devotees who devoted and dedicated their lives to the Mission. The Sewadal utilises Mukti Parv as Guru Puja Diwas. Thousands of Sewa Dal volunteers assemble at different centres to renew their pledge of devotion to the True Master and service to humanity.

SOCIAL WELFARE

WAY OF LIFE

The Sant Nirankari Mission is essentially a spiritual movement. Its principal commitment to its followers is to make their minds conscious of the Eternal Reality and unite their Soul with the Creator, the Formless God. The Mission believes that ignorance and superstition are the biggest obstacle of human path to real progress and happiness. The narrow-mindedness, hatred and pride brooded by them are the most vicious source of trouble for the mankind. The Mission endeavours to remove the same by bringing spiritual enlightenment within the reach of every man and woman—young or old, rich or poor, high or low, educated or illiterate, whatever the language, faith or culture, whatever the state or the nation.

The Mission, however, is certainly a down to earth, practical human experience. Neither does it seek to detach itself from human fraternity, nor does it advise its followers to be cut off from the society. The Mission would rather like every Nirankari to set an example of day-to-day life based on spiritual awakening. Universal Brotherhood, here, must become a way of life which implies that one should be always prepared to sacrifice comforts and help the needy. Devotion to God, it says, must find expression in our behaviour towards fellow-beings.

The Mission would, therefore, like to participate in social welfare effort, including health care and education, to the extent it can divert the resources from its primary activities as a spiritual movement. The Mission has already

gained repute for its services rendered for the rescue and rehabilitation of the people affected by natural calamities. Its volunteer corps, the Sant Nirankari Sewa Dal symbolises service to mankind as a part of devotion to God.

SEWA DAL

With the increasing number of Nirankari followers some spirited members suo-moto took the job for arranging congregations. By mid-fifties, the number of followers of the Mission multiplied manifold and the necessity arose for having an organized team of volunteers, now called Sant Nirankari Sewa Dal. During Samagams, they make all necessary arrangements for the boarding and lodging of the visiting devotees with a view to making their stay as comfortable as possible. They practically set up townships with all facilities like tentage, sewerage, security, first-aid, cafes, inquiry centres, community kitchen (Langar), etc.

The Sewa Dal, as is clear from its very name is an organisation of volunteers engaged in the service of the Mission without any pecuniary interest or any other material compensation from the Sant Nirankari Mandal. To serve humanity is considered as the sacred duty by every volunteer of the Nirankari Sewa Dal. To them it is as good as devotion to God. Even for their uniforms, they spend from their own resources.

The Nirankari Sewa Dal symbolises the Mission's commitment to the spirit of self-discipline and selfless service to humanity. Today the Nirankari Sewa Dal has thousands of volunteers, men and women in their respective

uniforms. They come from all communities, from all classes of the society. They are businessmen, doctors, teachers, professors, officers, engineers, architects, craftsmen, workers, labourers, rather people from all ranks. They work shoulder to shoulder, least conscious of their social, economic or official status.

The Sewa Dal remains ever ready to help the people in pain and misery, and they reach wherever they are needed. During 1965 and 1971 Indo-Pak conflicts when the police personnel and the Home Guards volunteers were deployed for paramilitary jobs, the Sant Nirankari Sewa Dal effectively helped the authorities in traffic management in various cities, including Delhi. This was in addition to the donation of Rs. 25,000 by the Mission towards the National Defence Fund in 1965. In 1977 when many areas of Delhi were hit by floods, these selfless volunteers not only saved the flood-hit people and removed them to safer places but also ran a dispensary to give free medicines to the sick, round the clock. The Sewa Dal did yeoman's service to flood victims in Punjab and Haryana in 1994 and 1996 and then cyclone-hit people in Andhra Pradesh in 1996, which was highly appreciated by State authorities. They also lent a helping hand in mitigating the miseries of earthquake victims in Latur in Maharashtra during 1993. They rendered commendable services in Gujarat following an earthquake that rocked several parts of the State in January, 2001.

BLOOD DONATION

The Sant Nirankari Mission today is one of the leading blood donating voluntary organisations in India. Scores of blood donation camps are organised in the month of April every year to commemorate the martyrdom of Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji who fell to the bullets of some fanatics on April 24, 1980, and of all such devotees and Missionaries who laid down their lives for the sake of the Mission and its lofty message. The day is observed as Human Unity Day. These camps are held as per the wishes of the present Spiritual Head of the Mission, Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj who said that donation of blood would be the best tribute to Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji and other martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the sake of Truth and human values. Moreover, blood donation is the best service one could offer to humanity. When transfused in human veins blood knows no religion, caste or nationality.

The Mission has organised about 450 Blood Donation Camps in India during the past over one decade. It is estimated that more than 100,000 units of blood have so far been donated by the volunteers of the Sant Nirankari Sewa Dal and other devotees. Quite often, His Holiness, his esteemed spouse and other members of the gracious family also donate blood during these camps. The miracle is that the number of blood donors always exceeds the capacity of the blood collecting teams. In view of this, in fact, from 1997 the blood donation camps have been staggered over the entire summer months to

meet the requirement when the blood banks face shortage.

HEALTH CARE

The Mission is running a full-fledged Health Care Centre with modern facilities at the Mandal Headquarters in Delhi. Moreover, land has already been acquired adjacent to the Nirankari Santokh Sarovar Complex to set up a General Hospital. In Madras (Chennai), the Mission has a mini Hospital. In addition, the Mission has about 120 charitable dispensaries attached to Sant Nirankari Satsang Bhawans in different parts of the country, where medicines and treatment are provided free to thousands of patients every month. The Mission has also set up about half a dozen pathological laboratories, two dental care centres and one eye care centre, all working on charitable basis. The Medical Department of the Sant Nirankari Mandal is also actively participating in the Immunisation Programme, Hepatitis Control Programme and other public health programmes of the Government as also the Blindness Eradication Programme of the World Health Organisation.

FREE EYE CAMPS

Free Eye Camps for cataract operations are also organised by the Mission from time to time in close coordination with local authorities. Every care is taken to ensure post-operation care. Besides free treatment, lenses and glasses are also provided free of cost to the patients who generally come from economically weaker sections of the society. There are instances where

Nirankari devotees have donated their eyes so that they serve humanity even after their death.

EDUCATION

The Mission is running Nirankari Baba Gurbachan Singh Memorial Degree College at Sohna, Distt. Gurgaon(Haryana) where students have university positions to their credit. The Mission has also a number of Senior Secondary Schools and Public Schools in and outside Delhi, where apart from curricular instruction, moral education is also imparted so as to prepare the youngsters to come up as ideal citizens with high character.

The Education Department of the Sant Nirankari Mandal is running a scholarship scheme under which the merited students of the schools and colleges run by the Mandal are given scholarships. The Nirankari children achieving distinctions in other schools and colleges run or recognised by the Government are also covered under this scheme. This scheme benefits the proficient and the needy students in academic, technical and professional fields. The Nirankari students showing excellence in foreign languages, all-India and State-level competitions and sports are also attracted under the umbrella of the scheme.

WELFARE OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

The Social Welfare Department of the Sant Nirankari Mandal has a scheme for the welfare of women. It has set up about 40 Tailoring and Embroidery Training Centres for widows and other needy women in Delhi, Chandigarh, Punjab,

Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Tripura and Karnataka. Child care Centres have been set up at Jalandhar in Punjab and Hanumangarh in Rajasthan.

COMPASSIONATE AID

The Mission is providing adhoc relief/financial assistance in individual cases to the aged, infirm handicapped, widows, poor and the needy persons, who have no support and cannot make both ends meet. They also include many families who lost their bread earners in terrorist-violence in Punjab.

Varied amounts of money were donated by the Mission to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund for the rehabilitation of the victims of natural calamities. Such contributions were made following an earthquake in Uttar Kashi, floods in Punjab and Haryana and a cyclone in Andhra Pradesh. Contribution was also made to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund in Maharashtra following bomb blasts in 1993. Following the Earthquake in Gujarat in January 2001, the Mission raised a special fund for the rehabilitation of the affected families. Consequently, a Nirankari Colony was set up in Indraprastha (New Dudhai), Distt. Bhuj, in close co-ordination with the State Government and a Delhi based voluntary organisation engaged in similar effort. Initially, a provision was made for 32 families. The colony will also have a Satsang Bhawan with free Dispensary attached to it.

Simple Marriages

The Mission advises its followers to observe

maximum austerity in marriages and other social functions. It counsels them to avoid unnecessary show of dowry etc. The Mission would, of course, exhort its members to spare whatever they can and utilise the same for the common good of humanity. Inter-caste marriages are also encouraged. In fact Nirankaris do not go by the caste or community in their social relations. What they value is the spiritual enlightenment and devotion to God. In order to make Nirankari weddings further economical, the Mission is now encouraging mass marriages also. A number of marriages take place at a single congregation.

Non-use of Intoxicants

The Mission considers intoxicants as the root cause of various social evils and the devotees are advised to refrain from taking the same. However, Nirankaris don't hate the addicts as such because they are pledged not to hate anyone on account of what one eats, drinks or wears. They hate the evil and not the person.

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APPROACHING THE MASSES

INTER-PERSONAL APPROACH

Once the heart is blissful, the mind can not be selfish. In fact, the heart becomes blissful only after the mind ceases to be selfish. This is all the more true in the realm of spirituality. The real pleasure of God Knowledge lies in its sharing with those who need it, seek it. The Sant Nirankari Mission is also guided by this very principle, when it seeks to reach out to the masses. The idea here is to help every individual sublimate his or her life through spiritual enlightenment and thus make life meaningful and useful not only for self but the entire mankind.

To this, there is another angle also. Knowledge and responsibility are inter-linked in direct proportion. An educated civilized person walking by the road side notices a banana-peel. He or she knows that this banana peel is slippery and can cause harm to anyone who happens to walk over it. This very knowledge makes the person responsible to remove the banana-peel from there. Likewise, an enlightened person, aware of the pit-falls of the ignorant and superstitious persons, can not help but preach to them the truthful way of life, full of light. Also as an ailing person feeling relief from a particular doctor feels pleasure in informing other patients of the same disease, it is but natural for the enlightened devotee to share the bliss of God-Knowledge realised with the kind benevolence of the True Master that relieved him or her of all worldly ills.

In this spirit, every Nirankari is a potential communicator of the Sant Nirankari Mission. At

every step and in every walk of life, he or she practises and preaches the message of the Mission. The congregations, whether small or thickly attended, as also the big Samagams, are organised with one of the objectives that people may see how the Nirankaris live and behave with one another, and may like to benefit from what they say and do. They are convinced that the best way to promote the spiritual message of the Mission is to display it in action, in day-to-day life.

Initially, congregation based on person-to-person approach was the only mode of taking the Mission's message to the masses. The Founder, Baba Buta Singh Ji and his close associate Baba Avtar Singh Ji would go round, meet the people and discuss the Truth they wanted to reveal to the world. Naturally, people had all kinds of queries and the congregations would turn into group-discussions. The approach, however, proved effective. While the message was simple, unaided and unloaded by complicated rites, rituals, customs and taboos, both Baba Buta Singh Ji and Baba Avtar Singh Ji were perfect orators and would answer every question to the satisfaction of the person(s) concerned. Consequently, many with spiritual leaning who were reluctant rather critical in the beginning, joined the movement and dedicated themselves to take its voice of Truth forward.

This inter-personal approach continued to be found useful even when the Headquarters of the Mission got shifted from Peshawar to Delhi in the wake of Partition in 1947, under the spiritual

stewardship of Baba Avtar Singh Ji. People from all castes and communities rallied round him, because they had just seen and experienced what damage the disease of casteism could inflict upon humanity. And the Mission offered the forum where all of them were welcomed and could sit together as equally respected and dignified members.

MASS MEDIA

As the Mission grew, efforts began to be made to take the help of the mass media also. By late fifties, the Mission was able to seek publicity not only through newspapers, though not many in number, but also over All India Radio and Films Division (Indian News Review). The subject was discussed during the Second Mussoorie Conference in May, 1973, where it was felt that the use of mass media and other modes of publicity may also be utilised to create mass awareness about the message of the Mission. The then Head of the Mission, Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji loved to meet media persons and answer questions, so that they could understand the Mission's ideology and project it correctly through the media they represented.

This media approach has been continued by His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj also. Today, the Department of Publicity and Public Relations is in touch with the media persons on regular basis. Press Teams have been set up at important newspaper centres in the country to keep the media informed about the Mission's activities from time to time. The Annual Samagams in Delhi and State level Samagams

elsewhere are not the only occasions to invite newsmen or issue press releases. The spiritual tours of His Holiness and senior Missionaries are also utilised for media coverage.

Besides newspapers of all levels of circulation, the Mission is taking advantage of the News and other programmes over the electronic media also. Information about the Mission is available even in the Internet. Video-cassettes based on the discourses by His Holiness are run by several cable and satellite networks, with the result that they are viewed by devotees and others in almost all parts of the world. Baba Ji's visits abroad are noticed with keen interest by the media in those countries and regions. There are instances where certain TV networks have devoted full slot of a programme to the Mission's ideology and its activities.

One thing that must be mentioned here is that while approaching and making use of the print, audio and video media, the Mission does not seek at all to be praised for its spiritual message or social welfare activities. The idea is only to keep the world informed and explain the relevance of its ideology to the life of the people.

SPIRITUAL TOURS

All these efforts, however, appear to be a mere shadow when compared to the real force behind the Mission's popularity i.e., the spiritual tours of the True Master. Initially, Baba Buta Singh Ji and Baba Avtar Singh Ji did not mind walking miles together to meet even a single devotee or the seeker of Truth. They knew that

ignorant people caught into the web of ritualism would not be able to come out unless they were helped to do so. In order to rise from the slumber of ignorance, one does require a shake up from those who are already awakened. So they went from place to place, notwithstanding the poor means of transportation. Gradually people started listening to them and the number of devotees increased day by day.

Following the Partition of India in 1947, the devotees migrated from Peshawar, Rawalpindi and other areas of West Punjab (Pakistan) and settled wherever they found a place on this side of the border. Practically they scattered all over East Punjab, Delhi and other parts of India. A number of them moved from Sindh to Maharashtra and settled in Bombay and other towns. The then Head of the Mission, Baba Avtar Singh Ji came to Delhi and made it the centre of the Mission's activities. For some time, he concentrated on the devotees in Delhi. He would visit them at their places, inquire about their welfare and, of course, talk to their neighbours also about the Formless God, Nirankar. The devotees appreciated the gesture as it went a long way to enable them to bear with rather come out of the agony of Partition and the migration that it brought in its wake. Baba Ji's words came as soothing balm on their wounds and encouraged them to accept the situation as will of God and have faith in a better future.

Subsequently, Baba Ji started visiting devotees outside Delhi also. Whereas the

devotees would feel overwhelmed with gratitude for this benevolence of the Satguru, many others felt attracted because of his spiritual personality and the way he post his message across. They would like to ask questions related to spirituality and once convinced, they joined the Mission gladly. In a way, people would assemble wherever Baba Ji went and the gathering would automatically turn into a congregation, discussing how to realise the Almighty and lead a life based on God-consciousness.

With the setting up of the Sant Nirankari Mandal in 1948, spiritual tours of Baba Ji became a regular feature of the Mission's activities. The Mandal would inform the devotees in advance, so that they could make suitable arrangements for the congregation as also for Baba Ji's stay. No wonder, the devotees would feel privileged when their place was included in Baba Ji's itinerary. At many places they would arrange for a procession to express their gratitude and reverence to their Spiritual Master.

Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji continued the practice and would like to visit as many places as possible round the year. The presence of his benign spouse, Nirankari Rajamata Kulwant Kaur Ji added further grace to these spiritual tours and encouraged women to come forward in large numbers and share the bliss of spiritual enlightenment. Processions during their visits to various places became more and more popular as also colourful. On their part, the divine couple did not care for their comforts and blessed the devotees in far flung places including those in

hilly, rural and backward areas. The congregations that took off as virtual group-discussions during the days of Baba Buta Singh Ji and became a regular forum for the praise of God during Baba Avtar Singh Ji's time, attained the form of crowded public gatherings, proving that the Mission had now become a mass movement of spiritual awakening. The stress on religious tolerance and communal harmony was always visible both during processions and in congregations.

The first spiritual tour abroad was undertaken by Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji, in July, 1967. Accompanied by Rajmata Ji and some Missionaries, Baba Ji visited U.K. and some European countries by road. This was followed by a visit by Baba Avtar Singh Ji in 1968. And in 1971 Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji and Rajmata Ji had their first world spiritual tour covering Far East, USA, Canada, UK and some other countries. Thereafter, the divine couple toured various parts of the world almost every year till 1977. These visits were also marked by colourful processions, conventions and Samagams, which showed that the world found the Mission's message relevant to the needs of the mankind.

His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj has also maintained the tradition of spiritual tours within the country and abroad. Ever since he took over as Head of the Mission in 1980, Baba Ji and his esteemed spouse Pujya Mata Swinder Ji have been undertaking long and hectic tours of different places all over India and visiting some countries or the others, for better

part of the year. Even when in Delhi, Baba Ji addresses congregations at the Mission's headquarters and in the nearby areas almost daily. Certain colonies, towns, villages, states and countries not visited earlier are included particularly in every itinerary.

In fact, the stage has already arrived where people from far flung places assemble at one centre to listen to His Holiness, so that he saves time to bless some other areas. Today almost every congregation addressed by Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj gives a look of a big Samagam. It is also a big occasion to attract the mediapersons who take the voice of Truth further to masses through their newspapers and electronic networks.

In addition, spiritual tours are also undertaken by Mukhis, Parmukhs and Pracharaks in their own areas. A number of Missionaries visit different states of the country as per spiritual tours planned by the Headquarters at Delhi. Some of them go abroad also.

Spiritual tours, thus, remain a vital source of taking the Mission's message to the masses and making it popular. Coming from His Holiness, it goes home direct and leaves indelible impression on the minds of those who listen to him. The learned Missionaries also attract people by the style of their presentation and more so by their living up to what is sought to be preached by the Mission.

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NIRANKARI LITERATURE

The Sant Nirankari Mission is a mission of the masses. Ever since Baba Avtar Singh Ji migrated from Peshawar in 1947 and set up the Mission's Headquarters in Delhi, every effort has been made to keep them informed about its activities through its own magazines, books and other literature in the form of small booklets, pamphlets, folders and so on. Photographs, audio cassettes and now video cassettes also form an important part of the activities of the Mission's Publication Department.

Since the Mission is a spiritual movement, the principal commitment of Nirankari literature is to elucidate its spiritual aspect i.e. its ideology, philosophy and the principles. Every effort is made to see that what is preached by Nirankari Baba through his discourses and sought to be communicated by other Missionaries and devotee saints during congregations is made available in printed word also. This helps not only those who listen to Baba Ji or attend congregations, but also those who might have not been able to do so. The needs of elite or scholarly readers in different languages are also taken care of both by Nirankari periodicals and books. Moreover, the Mission is convinced that a truthful record of what is preached and practised today will constitute the Mission's history for succeeding generations.

MAGAZINES

Started in 1949 in Punjabi. 'Sant Nirankari' is the oldest and the most prominent magazine of the Mission. A purely spiritual periodical, it contains the discourses of His Holiness Nirankari

Baba and write-ups from enlightened saints. Sometimes, the entire issue is devoted to a selected theme such as Devotion to God, Universal Brotherhood, Tolerance, etc.

Today the magazine is published in 9 languages. The English, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu editions are published from Delhi while others are : Marathi - Bombay; Gujarati - Baroda; Telugu - Hyderabad; Bengali - Calcutta; and Oriya - Cuttack. As regards periodicity, the 'Sant Nirankari' magazine is published as a Monthly in English, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu and Marathi; while it is a Bi-monthly in Gujarati and Quarterly in Telugu, Bengali and Oriya.

'Ek Nazar' is a news magazine, containing information on day-to-day activities of the Mission. It also contains the discourses of His Holiness and write-ups on non-controversial subjects of social interest. It is published from Delhi as a Fortnightly in Hindi and Punjabi, separately.

'Hansti Duniya' is another popular Nirankari magazine. It is published from Delhi as a Monthly in English, Hindi and Punjabi. 'Hansti Duniya' is primarily for children. It seeks to update their knowledge in all aspects besides inculcating moral and ethical values in them through write-ups, short stories, tit-bits and poems with spiritual touch. There are several features of this magazine which help the children in proper development of their personality, such as science, technology, environment, etc.

No doubt the lovers of Nirankari literature abroad subscribe to the magazines published from India, some of them have their own journals

also. For example, 'The Nirankari Journal' is brought out as Quarterly in English from California in USA. 'The Target', another magazine, is released from Smethic, UK. It is also a Quarterly in English. Both these journals are of newsletter nature and carry excerpts from the discourses of His Holiness and information about the Mission's activities in their respective areas.

BOOKS

The Mission has a vast treasure of literature in the form of books in different languages. The most popular among them are, of course, based on the life and discourses of the Nirankari Baba, particularly Baba Avtar Singh Ji, Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji and His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj. The Publication Department has many titles from learned saints that deal with different aspects of the Mission's ideology and principles of congregation (Satsang), service to humanity (Sewa) and remembrance of God (Simran).

AVTAR BANI

'Avtar Bani' is key to the Sant Nirankari Mission. Named after its author Nirankari Baba Avtar Singh Ji, it was first brought out in 1957. Its enlarged version was, however, published in 1965 as 'Sāmpuran Avtar Bani'—the complete Avtar Bani. Originally written in easy Punjabi verse, with some stanzas in Urdu and Sindhi, Avtar Bani explains the message of the Mission in all its aspects. Even though not worshipped as a holy religious book, every Nirankari values it for its authenticity. Avtar Bani has already

been published in Gurmukhi, Devnagri, Urdu and Roman scripts. It has also been translated and published in English (verse and prose), Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Nepali and Marathi verse.

AUDIO CASSETTES

The Mission has brought out a series of audio cassettes. There are cassettes containing holy discourses by Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj in Hindi, Punjabi and English. Similarly, there are audio cassettes on Avtar Bani, the hymns having been sung by renowned singers on different classical tunes. Then there are a number of cassettes containing devotional songs from different singers and poets. All these cassettes on Avtar Bani and devotional songs have been prepared in different languages such as Hindi, Punjabi, Marathi, Sindhi, Gujarati, Dogari, Bengali, Rajasthani, Bhojpuri etc.

VIDEO CASSETTES

Video Cassettes have been brought out on the various Annual Nirankari Sant Samagams held in Delhi, including the poetic symposia organised during the same. From 1996, the discourses of His Holiness have been sub-titled in English. Some video cassettes have also been prepared covering the tours of the Nirankari Baba. The discourses of Baba Hardev Singh Ji during Annual Samagams in Delhi and elsewhere as also at other important congregations have also been brought out in video cassettes of 25 to 30 minutes' duration. In addition, the Mission has brought out several video cassettes containing Avtar Bani Hymns and Devotional Songs.

ORGANISATION

INDIA

In order to institutionalise the organisation and streamline the activities of the Mission, the then Spiritual Head of the Mission, Baba Avtar Singh Ji gave it an organisational outfit, Sant Nirankari Mandal. The Mandal was got registered with its Headquarters at Delhi in September 1948. Its aims and objects include to preach and propagate the concept of One Formless God (Nirankar) and promote peace, non-violence and Universal Brotherhood among the people all over the world by holding congregations and otherwise. It is also stated that Sant Nirankari Mission is a religious order which believes that God can be realised only with the grace of living Satguru. Further, it shall not associate itself with any political party.

Initially, the Nirankari Baba nominated a seven-member Executive Body of the Mandal. Their principal qualification was devotion to God and the True Master as also their spirit of self-sacrifice for the fellow devotees. Baba Ji exhorted them to set an example for others through their personal life. Ever since, the members of the Executive Committee have exalted themselves in the eyes of the devotees for their sense of devotion, love and respect as also their guidance and help. In a way, time has proved the efficacy of the Mandal. The faith reposed in its members by the Master and the Mission has been upheld.

The Mandal found changes in its set up from time to time as and when considered necessary. The organisation indeed went on expanding with the growth of the Mission and its activities.

Today, it bears the complexion of any sound democratic institution although its basic commitment remains the same i.e. spiritual awakening among the masses. The Mission has about 1,000 Branches in India, Organisationally, each Branch is headed by a Mukhi or Pramukh. In addition, there are Missionaries (Pracharaks) who address congregations in close co-ordination with the Head of the Branch concerned. Generally, all these functionaries are authorised by His Holiness to reveal God-Knowledge to the seekers, on his behalf. For administrative efficiency, the Branches have been distributed among 36 Zones. The Zonal Incharge co-ordinates the activities among Branches and also serves as a link between the Branches and the Headquarters at Delhi. A Zonal Incharge is nominated by the Executive Committee with approval of the Satguru.

Today, the Mandal has the following organs:

- 1. GENERAL BODY :** It comprises all the Pracharaks, Mukhis, Pramukhs, Zonal Incharges, Sewa Dal office-bearers and such other members of the Mission as may be nominated by the Satguru. It meets at least once a year under the benign Chairmanship of the Satguru. The General Body reviews the progress of the Mission and lays down Policy guidelines for its promotion further.
- 2. WORKING COMMITTEE :** It consists of 51 Members or more, to be elected by the General Body for two years. It meets at least once a year and decides all Policy matters, including the Annual Budget.

3. **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE** : The Executive Committee may have at least 11 Members. They are nominated by the Satguru from amongst the Members of the Working Committee for two years. The Committee must meet at least once in two months. At present there are 19 Members of the Executive Committee, each Member looking after the subjects specifically allotted to him. This Committee has nine office-bearers i.e. President, two Vice-Presidents, one General Secretary, four Secretaries and one Treasurer. They are collectively responsible to implement the decisions taken by the Working Committee as also the General Body.
4. **ADVISORY COMMITTEES** : Almost every department has an Advisory Committee attached to it. The Member-in-charge of the Department is its Chairman. The members are such devotees as have the talent and experience of the subject concerned. Nominated by the Executive Committee with the blessings of His Holiness, the Members of the Advisory Committees have a tenure of two years.

All properties, movable and immovable, belonging to and acquired by the Mandal from time to time vest in 'The Sant Nirankari Mandal.' All donations, offerings, gifts etc. in cash or kind, constitute the funds and assets of the Mandal. These are utilized for activities and programs designed to achieve the aims and objects of the Mandal. Proper and true accounts of the income and expenditure in respect of the Mandal and

its Branches are maintained at Delhi Head- quarters under the overall supervision of the Executive Committee. The accounts of the Mandal are audited by the Chartered Accountants annually.

OVERSEAS

While Delhi (India) is the world headquarters of the Mission and, being the seat of the Satguru forms the 'Mother-Church' for this global Mission, the organisation in each country outside India enjoys considerable degree of managerial independence. All the Branches in one country look forward to their national headquarters of the Mission for policy-guidelines, plans and programs for reaching out the message of the Mission to more and more people. All funds received in the form of offerings/donations are retained and utilised for the Mission's activities in the country concerned. Similarly, they administer the properties of the Mission as per the rules and regulations of the local government. For this purpose there are independent Executive Boards to manage and propagate the Mission in the respective countries.

Organisationally, the Mission stands registered with the government in several countries, including U.S.A., Canada, U.K., Germany and Australia. The office-bearers are appointed as per the rules and regulations of the Mission in each country, with the approval of the Satguru.

In all, there are about 200 Branches of the Mission outside India. The Mission is already flourishing in countries like U.S.A., Canada and U.K. . Several towns in these countries have Sant

Nirankari Satsang Bhawans, where congregations are held regularly. Sewa Dal volunteers in uniform make all the arrangements. Considerable stress is laid on inter-country and inter-regional co-operation and co-ordination in the matter of missionary activities. Like in India, country-level and regional congregations (Samagams) are becoming more and more popular abroad also. For example, U.S.A. and Canada hold special Samagams jointly on regional basis. The UK Sant Nirankari Mandal over-sees the missionary activities all over Europe.

The spiritual tours of His Holiness offer a special occasion for the devotees from different states and countries to get together at one place and seek his benign blessings. Such tours are being requested by more and more overseas branches every year.

HISTORY

PERSONAGES

Going by the spiritual personages heading the Mission, it dates back to 1929 when Baba Buta Singh Ji revealed God Knowledge to Baba Avtar Singh Ji. Then onwards, the Mission has been headed by four spiritual personages. Their life history virtually lays open before us the step-wise complete history of the Mission as it stands today. When we refer to Baba Buta Singh Ji, we get to know the foundation of the Mission. The broad-basing and organizing the Mission reminds us of Baba Avtar Singh Ji as founder of the Sant Nirankari Mandal. Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji evinced an absorbing interest and took the Mission across the country. The setting up of the Working Committee of the Mandal, construction of a chain of congregation centres (Satsang Bhawans) and, of course, his supreme sacrifice for the Mission makes us remember him with utmost gratitude. The present preceptor Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj is working day in and day out to take the Mission to every door-step in the world by multi-reach methods.

BABA BUTA SINGH JI MAHARAJ (1873-1943)

The founder of the Sant Nirankari Mission, Baba Buta Singh Ji was born in the year 1873 at Village Headwal, Distt. Kaimalpur (now in Pakistan) in the family of Shri Vishan Singh Ji and Smt. Mayawanti Ji. He had spiritual leaning from the very childhood and had developed a special aptitude for reciting Gurbani (holy verses from the Adi Granth). A good orator on Gurbani, he was equally sincere and serious in understanding the same. This trait helped paving his way to reach and realise the Truth. It is said that whenever he used to recite Gurbani or sing the same, he would be so lost in it as to forget even his physical self. He was so clear headed and strong-minded in his concepts that

nobody could utter even a single word to negate his view point.

One day, while singing, Baba Buta Singh Ji repeated the following line four times:-

“MOHAN GHAR AAVO, HAUN KARON JODARIYA”
(O Lord, come home, I humbly entreat.)

Those sitting in the congregation were enjoying the delightful recitation. One of them, Bhai Sahib Kahan Singh Ji, who was also listening to Baba Buta Singh Ji with rapt attention, noted the repetition of the above line. After the programme, he could not resist approaching Baba Buta Singh Ji. He asked him politely, “Bhai Buta Singh Ji, where is your Mohan (Lord) whom you want to meet?” and added hastily, “First know Him, otherwise your calling Him will have no effect.” These words had a piercing effect on Baba Buta Singh Ji. He clearly understood that the person did possess some spiritual secret. He followed him for knowing the Truth. Bhai Sahib Kahan Singh Ji tried to put him off, but ultimately he had to yield to the former’s humility and strong urge to know the Secret, but with a suggestion that he would not share it further with any one. Baba Buta Singh Ji pleaded humbly, “Kindly don’t impose any restrictions. The world is as thirsty as I am. People are suffering badly for want of God-Knowledge. Let there be no conditions.” Bhai Sahib Kahan Singh Ji explained that Truth is never accepted by the world readily. Intoxicated by materialism and afflicted by pride, it would not listen to a devotee of God and believe him without reluctance. There would be criticism,

there would be opposition, there would be resistance. Vested interests would always create hurdles in the path of Truth. He, however, appreciated the keenness on the part of Baba Buta Singh Ji and revealed the Secret with a practical hint. To his utmost delight, Baba Buta Singh Ji found himself surrounded by the omnipresent God he had always entreated to meet. 'Mohan' did come 'home'!

At the time of receiving Brahm Gyan or God Knowledge, Baba Buta Singh Ji was 40 years old. For about 15 years he remained quiet, assimilating what he had come to know from Bhai Sahib Kahan Singh Ji and comparing it with the vast knowledge of Gurbani he had. Thereafter, Baba Buta Singh Ji started revealing the Divine Secret to whosoever was found interested. The approach was, of course, cautious and selective.

Baba Buta Singh Ji and his esteemed wife led a simple life with not many demands. They had no children. Future, therefore, was never a cause of worry for the couple. Even otherwise, being a staunch devotee of God, Baba Buta Singh Ji would not like to think of worldly requirements beyond what was necessary for 'present'. For livelihood, he depended on his skill of tattooing. It enabled the holy couple not only to maintain themselves, but also to serve their guests, mostly the God-loving people.

Baba Buta Singh Ji would spend most of his time in discussing spiritualism with friends and other acquaintances. He would not mind even visiting them. Those who had the occasion to

meet him bear witness to the fact that he had to labour hard and even face trouble while trying to convince people that whatever he sought to convey was reality, the Truth. It is said that he had a providential escape when somebody tried to kill him by poison. Baba Buta Singh Ji was, however, always kind and forgave his opponents and the critics.

The Sant Nirankari Mission had its formal beginning on 25th May, 1929, when Baba Avtar Singh Ji received God-Knowledge from Baba Buta Singh Ji and joined him in taking the spiritual light to as many people as possible. The two formed a spirited team until Baba Buta Singh Ji breathed his last in 1943 and the Satguru manifested himself in Baba Avtar Singh Ji.

BABA AVTAR SINGH JI MAHARAJ (1900-1969)

Baba Avtar Singh Ji was born in a small village named Latifal in Jhelum District (Pakistan) on December 31, 1899 in the family of Shri Mukha Singh Ji and Smt. Narayani Devi Ji. He was being brought up with due affection and indulgence, but when he was just 6 years, his father fell ill and breathed his last. This untimely loss was a big jolt to the family. The burden of looking after the family fell on Mata Narayani's shoulders. The boy Avtar was entrusted to the care of Shri Nand Lal, a local priest, for education as there was no school in the village. In a short span of time he was able to study scriptures. Avtar proved to be extraordinarily intelligent and always spoke sweet language.

Family hardships made Avtar a very strong and determined boy. He was on the look out for some job to earn livelihood. Once his maternal uncle came from Rawalpindi to meet Narayani Devi Ji. Avtar who was about 12 years old accompanied him to Rawalpindi. This was a step that marked the beginning of Avtar's life of determination and firm faith in goodness. In Rawalpindi, Avtar worked as domestic servant and also as a porter at railway station. There, he incidentally came in contact with Seth Sawan Mal, who owned a bakery. Impressed by his integrity and hard work, Seth Sawan Mal employed Avtar in his bakery and eventually handed over the whole unit to him.

While showing due progress in the business and devotion to worship, he also got linked in

the rising surge for the freedom of his country. He participated in a procession related to freedom movement in Amritsar in 1919. In the mean time, there was an Akali Movement and Avtar was sent as a leading member of the Morcha at Jaiton, which led him to jail. While in jail he had an urge to know the self. He used to devote all his spare time in meditation. On being relieved from jail after two and a half years, he was a changed man. Quest for truth made him restless. Meanwhile, he was married to Budhwanti Ji.

HOLY MEETING

Baba Avtar Singh Ji recited Gurbani regularly. Impressed by his interest, Dhanna Singh who used to supply milk at the bakery persuaded him to meet Baba Buta Singh Ji. And the holy meeting took place on the 25th of May, 1929.

Baba Buta Singh Ji found him so keen to know the Truth that he revealed God-Knowledge to him instantaneously. Baba Avtar Singh Ji felt fully convinced of the Reality. Ecstasy took hold of him and he was all praise for the Master and Nirankar, the Formless God all around. He surrendered himself completely to Baba Buta Singh Ji and said that hereafter his life would be the same as the True Master (Satguru) would like it to be. He declared that he had found his destiny at the holy feet of Baba Buta Singh Ji. Baba Buta Singh Ji was also happy because he found in Baba Avtar Singh Ji the kind of devotee he had been looking for since long, a person who would surrender his body, mind and material assets at the altar of divinity, take the spiritual

light to the masses and share the eternal bliss with those who were otherwise fumbling in the darkness of ignorance. So, both Baba Buta Singh Ji and Baba Avtar Singh Ji worked together and the movement gathered momentum. As expected, they faced a lot of opposition from the orthodox elements, but this failed to deter them from the path of truth. The two were together for about 14 years. On many occasions, Baba Avtar Singh Ji's honesty, sincerity, devotion and dedication towards his True Master and the Almighty was put to test. Every time, he proved upto the mark and won praise from the True Master.

Before Baba Buta Singh Ji breathed his last at Murree in 1943, he removed the white scarf and put it around Baba Avtar Singh Ji's neck, indicating that hereafter he would like Baba Avtar Singh Ji to head the Mission. He, however, told him in the presence of other devotees, "This white scarf may not be taken as a sign of decoration. It is a chain of sharp razors. If you keep your neck straight, the razors will not cause any harm, but as soon as you turn your neck, it would be suicidal." Baba Avtar Singh Ji bowed his head at the feet of Baba Buta Singh Ji and accepted his command. He knew that what he meant was not to divert his attention from the path of Truth at no time and under no circumstances.

TRUE MASTER

Baba Avtar Singh Ji succeeded Baba Buta Singh Ji and preached the divine message during the period 1943-62. He was all out for the uplift of mankind through dissemination of the divine

word. He faced opposition from different fronts in carrying out his missionary obligations, but he remained moulded and welded to the Truth. He appeased the flood of opposition with his humility and love. He possessed wonderful skill to convince his critics, provided they chose to listen to him. There are many instances where critics, after listening to Baba Ji, joined the Mission and dedicated their lives to the propagation of its message.

Following the Partition of India in 1947, Baba Avtar Singh Ji had to migrate from Rawalpindi to Delhi. Baba Ji settled at Paharganj. Devotees migrating from Pakistan also maintained their link with Baba Ji and many of them sought rehabilitation in and around Delhi. In order to meet the requirements of the children of the devotees and others, Baba Avtar Singh Ji opened Sant Nirankari School in Paharganj, (which is now a Senior Secondary School). Subsequently, he also established Sant Nirankari Colony in North Delhi and shifted the Headquarters of the Mission there. Santokh Sarovar was also dug near the Colony.

To give an organisational outfit to the expanding Nirankari Mission, Baba Avtar Singh Ji founded Sant Nirankari Mandal in 1948 and got it registered with Headquarters at Delhi. Establishing branches in various cities with Pramukhs-incharge also came in the priority agenda of the Master for streamlining the expansion of the Mission. For this very purpose, Sant Nirankari Sewa Dal also came into being. Publication Wing was set up for books and

periodicals. Books containing philosophy of the Mission were attempted by scholar missionaries with deep inspiration from the Master. Avtar Bani has been a unique contribution by the Master himself.

Meanwhile, the Mission attracted people from all castes and communities. On the one hand, its ideology was easy to understand and follow in practical day-to-day life. The Mission prescribed no cumbersome rituals or costly ceremonies. It liberated them from all kinds of taboos. Then, it loved all and hated none. And on the other, the masses had just experienced the havoc that communalism and religious intolerance could play with the mankind. They had gone through the misery before Partition and suffered from the agony even thereafter. They had not only seen the disease of casteism in its full swing, but felt the sting also. So, they welcomed the Mission where all of them were treated as equally respected and dignified members of the one human society. They found here what they really needed—the spiritual balm to heal their worldly wounds, the inner strength to bear the sorrow and the morale boost to continue their journey of life. So, the number of people attending Nirankari congregations went on increasing day by day under the spiritual mastership of Baba Avtar Singh Ji.

DEVOTEE AGAIN

One of the unique things related to Baba Avtar Singh Ji is that during his life time itself he took a decision to revert from the Satguru to an ordinary devotee. While addressing a

congregation in Delhi on December 3, 1962, he took the gathering by surprise as he said that hereafter they should address Gurbachan Singh Ji as Baba Ji. He asked them to no longer address him as 'Seth Ji' or 'Bhapa Ji' but show him the same respect as they had been showing to himself. With this the Satguru stood manifested in Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji. The next Annual Nirankari Sant Samagam which opened on November 5, 1963 was, of course, the first occasion when the devotees from all over the country saw Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji as the Spiritual Head of the Mission.

As a devotee, Baba Avtar Singh Ji became an example to others. He showed full reverence to the Satguru of the time, Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji. In all matters related to the Mission, he would take the decision of Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji as final. Many times missionaries and devotees would come and seek his advice. He would express his opinion, but advise them at the same time that they should go by the final decision that is taken by Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji himself.

It would be interesting to recall that during the first Mussoorie Conference convened by Satguru Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji in 1965, it was Baba Avtar Singh Ji who as one of the delegates put up a proposal that the Mission should have its own congregation centres (Satsang Bhawans) at as many places as possible. He argued that this was necessary in view of the increasing number of devotees. They must have a common place for regular congregations. Baba

Avtar Singh Ji also suggested that the devotees may be encouraged to contribute a small amount towards Building Fund on monthly basis. The proposal was, of course, accepted and approved by the Conference. And today we realise the significance and appreciate his far sightedness with gratitude.

It may be mentioned that in 1968 Baba Avtar Singh Ji visited U.K. While Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji's tour the previous year had been devoted to simple familiarisation, Baba Avtar Singh Ji utilised his visit for an intensive communication of the message of the Mission. Instead of holding congregations in the open, he preferred to contact individuals on person-to-person basis. The result was that many people came forward to seek God-Knowledge. Once they were blessed with the divine light, they would be keen to take it to others and help them come out of the spell of ignorance.

In 1969 Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji and Rajmata Ji planned their second tour to U.K. But they were reluctant because Baba Avtar Singh Ji was not well. It was the latter, however, who persuaded them not to abandon the proposed tour. He was conscious of the excitement of the devotees in U.K. So he would not like to frustrate the same by asking Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji to stay back for the reason of his own ill-health. Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji, accompanied by Rajmata Ji, left for U.K. The tour had, however, to be cut short because of sudden deterioration in the health of Baba Avtar Singh Ji who breathed his last after a few days

of their return. In any case, Baba Avtar Singh Ji had proved how keen he was to see the Mission find roots abroad for which he himself had been able to sow the seed. His benign gesture to send Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji and Rajmata Ji to U.K. in spite of his illness, will always remain unforgettable.

Those who used to meet Baba Avtar Singh Ji during his illness, recall that he would never say that he was unwell. Whosoever enquired about his health, including the doctors, his reply was, "I am alright. Only my body has some problem....." This shows that he wanted to convey to the devotees that it is not the body that they should attach importance to, it is the Soul that they should value. And the Soul which is a particle of Super-Soul is above all ailments. No wonder, Baba Avtar Singh Ji breathed his last without showing any sign of worry that usually looms large on the face of a dying person.

The message of detachment was further confirmed by Satguru Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji who decided to perform the funeral without any show off. Going by worldly norms, having been the spiritual head of the Mission for about 20 years and lived the life so richly, Baba Avtar Singh Ji deserved a grand funeral with costly incenses, sandalwood etc. And his vast family of devotees had no dearth of the resources to arrange the same. But Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji explained that a dead body is just a dead body whether it belonged to an ordinary person, an intellectual, or even a holy man. So Baba

Avtar Singh Ji was given a simple funeral at the electric crematorium in Delhi.

The story perhaps would not be complete if we did not mention that Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji decided not to have any commemorative function or congregation on the 17th of September, the day when Baba Avtar Singh Ji breathed his last in 1969. Instead, he exhorted the devotees to pay homage to Baba Avtar Singh Ji on the 15th of August when they were already paying tributes to Jagat Mata Budhwanti Ji. The 15th of August was subsequently named as 'Mukti Parv' i.e. Spiritual Liberation Day. While the nation celebrates the Independence Day and expresses its gratitude to those who laid down their lives for freedom, the Nirankaris add another dimension, stressing the need for spiritual liberation of the mankind, the liberation of Soul, and remembering those who devoted their lives to this noble cause.

BABA GURBACHAN SINGH JI MAHARAJ (1930-1980)

Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji was one of those great masters who lived and died for the noble cause of human unity through spiritual awakening. Throughout, he endeavoured to transform the demoniac face of human society and inculcate the spirit of peaceful co-existence, love and harmony. He was pained to find people quarrelling and suffering because of hatred generated by ignorance, blind faith and superstition.

Fortunately, Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji did not have to go out to learn the real purpose of human life, the reason for human suffering and answer to their problems. His father, Baba Avtar Singh Ji and the founder of the Sant Nirankari Mission, Baba Buta Singh Ji blessed him with spiritual awakening and provided ample opportunity to him to imbibe and practise the noble traits of selfless service, surrender to the divine will and truthful living, free from any kind of hatred or jealousy. This turned his life into a practical version of spirituality, a living example of divine truth, so much so that Baba Avtar Singh Ji chose to see the Satguru manifesting himself in him and preferred to live as an ordinary follower of the Mission for the rest of his life.

Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji was born on December 10, 1930 in Peshawar, now in Pakistan. He received boundless love and affection from his parents, Baba Avtar Singh Ji and Jagat Mata Budhwanti Ji as also from the True Master Baba Buta Singh Ji, then residing

with the family for most of the time. Right from his infancy, the child Gurbachan manifested rare and remarkable qualities. These qualities comprised sensitiveness to human sorrow and suffering, sympathy for the afflicted, avoidance of disputes, discord and malice as also appreciation of fine traits in others.

Gurbachan was a shining student. After doing his Middle from Peshawar, he matriculated from the Khalsa School, Rawalpindi. He, however, could not pursue his studies further, because of the turmoil leading to the Partition of India. He, however, acquired rich and rare experience of practical life by his wisdom and intelligence.

During the turbulent days preceding the Partition, every parent wished to be relieved of his pressing responsibilities as quickly as possible. Accordingly, Bhai Manna Singh solemnised the marriage of his daughter, Kulwant Kaur Ji, with Gurbachan Singh Ji on April 22, 1947, at a simple ceremony. Kulwant Kaur Ji who subsequently became popular as Nirankari Rajmata, marched shoulder to shoulder with her husband. Surely, the couple had been united by the Almighty for the well being of humanity.

During the bloodshed following the Partition, the Hindus and Muslims forgot their centuries-old co-existence and amity. Leaving their hearths and homes, they migrated to India or Pakistan. Forced by the circumstances, even the Nirankari devotees who believed in Universal Brotherhood, had to migrate to India. For the migrants of the Rawalpindi area, a camp was set up at Wah. The Camp Officer entrusted to young Gurbachan the

job of looking after the inmates of the Camp. The step had a deeper significance. It was actually a test of his spirit of selfless service, self-sacrifice and sense of justice, which were displayed by him admirably. One day It was announced on behalf of the Government that those desirous of migrating to India, could do so by aeroplanes, then available. All the devotees accordingly left for India, leaving their belongings to the care of Gurbachan Singh Ji. A few days later, he loaded all the belongings of the devotees in a goods train and reached India.

Following the migration, while Baba Avtar Singh Ji resumed the Mission's activities, Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji started business in auto-parts, first in Jalandhar in Punjab and later in Delhi. Simultaneously, he took keen interest in congregations. He would drive Baba Avtar Singh Ji to the places of congregations both in the morning and in the evening. Besides being at the service of the Satguru, he attended to devotees also.

HEAD OF THE MISSION

On December 3, 1962, while addressing a gathering of devotees in Paharganj, Delhi, Baba Avtar Singh Ji declared that hereafter they should address Gurbachan Singh Ji as 'Baba Ji' and show him the same respect they had been showing to himself. Accordingly, Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji started presiding over the Mission from that day and the entire Nirankari world saw the Satguru manifested in him on November 5, 1963 when they assembled in Delhi for the 16th Annual Nirankari Sant

Samagam. Immediately thereafter Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji speeded up the tempo of preachings, thus attracting large numbers to the Mission. The resultant increase necessitated some organisational reforms. For this purpose, Baba Ji convened the First Mussoorie Conference on July 17 & 18, 1965, which was attended by the organisers and the preachers of the Mission. A number of important decisions were taken to accelerate the pace of preachings. To this end, the country was divided into four zones. On a suggestion from Baba Avtar Singh Ji who attended this conference as one of the missionaries, it was decided to start Building Fund for setting up Satsang Bhawans to enable devotees to hold congregations regularly. As suggested by the devotees from foreign countries, it was also decided to undertake missionary tours abroad.

This Conference proved very fruitful and its results were evident very soon. The organisation functioned more efficiently and the missionary activities picked up considerable momentum. Devotees all over India began to contribute towards Building Fund and the construction of Satsang Bhawans started. Through world-wide tours of Baba Ji and his missionaries, the message of the Mission spread all over. In this way, the campaign for human redemption and spiritual enlightenment hitherto confined to the boundaries of India, acquired global dimensions. Baba Ji vigorously pursued his missionary activities in distant countries and a series of spiritual tours for regeneration of mankind

were undertaken from 1967 to 1977 almost every year.

The 25th Annual Sant Samagam held from October 27 to 30 in 1972 was celebrated as the Silver Jubilee Samagam. To express their faith and devotion in their True Master, the devotees weighed Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji and his esteemed consort, Rev. Rajmata Kulwant Kaur Ji, against currency notes. The spectacle was watched ecstatically by hundreds of thousands of devotees. While appreciating this rare gesture of devotion and dedication, Baba Ji announced, "Not a single penny out of this amount would be spent for the personal use of any member of my family; all the money would be used for public welfare. Earned by the sweat of brow of the devotees, the money would bestow happiness and bliss for whatever noble cause it is utilised".

Baba Ji convened the Second Mussoorie Conference on May 14, 15 and 16, 1973. About 500 delegates from India and abroad participated in it. Baba Ji desired that everyone should express his/her views freely and frankly and invited suggestions for further popularisation of the Mission among masses. The Conference turned out to be a watershed in the history of the Mission as it proposed a code of conduct for the missionaries. It was also decided at this conference that while we may not hate others on account of their diet-habits, we ourselves should abstain from all kinds of intoxicants. Another decision was to observe austerity in marriages and other social functions and not to show off dowry, etc.

Baba Ji gave a clarion call to the youth to implement the above decisions. He also exhorted them to come to the fore for propagating the Mission vigorously and combating the social evils. He advised the older generation to give full encouragement to the youth in this direction, failing which they would not only themselves lag behind but also hamper the progress of the Mission. Interestingly, Baba Ji's son Hardev (the present Head of the Mission) and daughters Niranjan, Jagjit, Mohini and Swaran all had already joined Sewa Dal as its Primary Members. Subsequently all of them made their own mark as disciplined and selfless volunteers, while taking part in different wings of the Sewa Dal.

MULTIFACETED GENIUS

Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji had his own peculiar style of working. Generally, people spend a long time in framing detailed plans and projects. However, Baba Ji believed in prompt implementation. That is why he was able to turn the apparently impossible into the possible. A little ahead of the Sant Nirankari Colony, the Mission had a large piece of wasteland. In 1965, when the country was facing a severe shortage of foodgrains, Baba Ji thought of contributing his mite in this direction by bringing the said wasteland under cultivation. The poor and arid condition of the soil did not, however, permit its cultivation. According to all the neighbouring cultivators, accumulated salinity had rendered it unfit for cultivation. The experts of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi too considered the land unproductive. This seemed

to be the general consensus, but undeterred by such pessimistic verdicts, the enterprising and innovative Baba Ji took up the challenge. A little away from the land in question, the Government had set up a Water Treatment plant. The effluent from this plant made the surrounding area quite unhygienic. To kill two birds with one stone, Baba Ji chalked out a project to divert the effluent to this barren land. Thousands of devotees worked day and night for digging a long drain to divert the flow of this effluent from the plant to this land. In due course, the wasteland was transformed into a lush green field. The neighbouring farmers were amazed. The officials of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute too were wonder-struck when invited to see the wasteland yield a rich crop. They remarked that it was indeed a miracle. Baba Ji, however, said that given dedication, firm faith and hard work even an impossible task could be accomplished. The Baba distributed the quality seed produced in this piece of land among his farmer devotees to enable them to step up production. Incidentally, the following year was proclaimed as the year of "Green Revolution". The land in question topped in production of foodgrains in the area.

Likewise, keeping in view the scarcity of petrol facing the country, Baba Ji with a knack for innovation, converted the petrol engines of the Mission's vehicles into diesel ones. Interestingly, the entire work was done in the Mission's own workshop under Baba Ji's supervision. All this was a message to the world that hardwork and

sincerity of purpose were the master key to any achievement.

Though not a qualified architect or engineer, Baba Ji himself conceived and designed the plans of the Bhawans. This is a testimony to his genius. The imposing hall at the first floor of the Nirankari Satsang Bhawan in Sant Nirankari Colony, Delhi, is an example of his architectural skill. Dispensaries and schools were also set up along with various Bhawans. Buildings of two Senior Secondary Schools in Delhi and a Degree College at Sohna, Distt. Gurgaon, Haryana were also constructed as per Baba Ji's plans. Baba Ji took keen interest in homeopathy also.

OPPOSITION

As in the case of any other radical crusade for truth or a popular movement for spiritual enlightenment, social reforms and moral regeneration in the world, the Sant Nirankari Mission too had its share of opposition, false propaganda and violent wrath. Perhaps otherwise, history might have gone unrepeated. The voice of Truth first raised by Baba Buta Singh Ji and Baba Avtar Singh Ji accompanied by their practical approach to it, left the orthodox elements puzzled and amazed. While some of them expressed their anger over their life-style, others sought elucidation and explanation about what they preached. This opposition thus by and large remained confined to discussions on the ideology. No wonder, many of them, fully satisfied with the clarifications, sought the divine knowledge. And once blessed with the revelation of the Formless, they preferred not only to stay

with the Mission but dedicated themselves to the propagation of its message. Now they wanted to share the bliss with one and all.

The rapid growth and wide-spread acceptability of the Mission under the spiritual guidance of Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji, however, upset the detractors to the level of desperation. The opposition was more conspicuous in Punjab because the spread of the Mission's message there was spectacular. Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji openly invited the Mission's critics to first understand what it says and then point out if there was anything wrong. But all his gestures fell flat on them. The Nirankari congregations were disturbed at many places and violent attacks reported from several centres. For example, they disturbed a Nirankari congregation in Pathankot and prevented Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji from proceeding to another congregation at Qadian in Punjab in September 1997.

The worst, however, was the attack during the Samagam in Amritsar on April 13, 1978. About 200 armed extremists attacked the Nirankari devotees who were taking lunch (Langar) after they returned from a procession. Thousands of them had led Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji and Rajmata Kulwant Kaur Ji in an open carriage as per the route already approved by district authorities, and the procession had concluded peacefully. The citizens of Amritsar had also greeted Baba Ji and Rajmata Ji with reverence. The main session of the Samagam was yet to start. Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji and Rajmata Ji were at the local Nirankari Satsang

Bhawan where the betrothal ceremony of their youngest daughter was taking place. The police tried to stop the armed extremists near the venue but in vain. As the situation became out of control, the police had to open fire. Eighteen precious lives were lost before the extremists could be repulsed.

To their utter dismay, the Nirankaris began to be picked up by the police. They detained 64 Nirankari devotees, accused them of murder and launched prosecution against them as well as Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji himself. On the other hand, it was discovered that no extremist involved in this organized violence was arrested, while the extremists killed in the firing were proclaimed as martyrs and given state funeral.

At the same time, the Nirankaris were prevented from going to their Satsang Bhawans to hold their congregations, throughout Punjab. The police seized and locked the Satsang Bhawans in many cities of the State ostensibly to protect them from being attacked by extremists. With the benign blessings of Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji, however, the entire Nirankari fraternity maintained their cool. The Mission's activities continued as usual in almost all parts of the country except, of course, Punjab, where the story was that of suffering and sacrifice. In February, 1979, Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji set up a 51-Member Working Committee to be elected by the Sant Nirankari Mandal's General Body, to take policy decisions related to the activities of the Mission. The idea was not only to further democratise the Mission's working, but also to see that its growth continued in all directions.

As regards the court case, the Sessions Judge, Karnal in Haryana acquitted all the 65 Nirankaris, including Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji, honourably, on January 4, 1980. This ended the agony for all those who had remained in judicial custody ever since the Amritsar Samagam.

The unholy crusade of the extremist elements had, however, continued even while the court case was on. On September 26, 1978, they attacked a Nirankari congregation in the Satsang Bhawan, Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh, where Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji was present. Though Baba Ji escaped, six devotees lost their precious lives. Now that the Nirankaris were acquitted in the Amritsar case, the extremists stepped up their violence further with Baba Ji as their principal target. In March 1980 Baba Ji along with some of his missionaries was proceeding to Durg in Madhya Pradesh to address a congregation. A speeding truck collided with the particular car which Baba Ji usually used. As the vehicle came to a halt, one assailant jumped out from the truck and sprayed bullets on the car. By chance, Baba Ji happened to be travelling in a different car on that day and thus this attempt to assassinate him also proved abortive. One devotee, however, lost her life in the tragic incident.

The fanatics, however, succeeded in their nefarious design on April 24, 1980 when Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji fell to their bullets on his return to the Headquarters in Sant Nirankari Colony in Delhi towards mid-night after addressing a congregation. One of his

distinguished devotees Partap Singh was also shot dead. Naturally, every peace loving person lamented and condemned the senseless act of fanatics as an attack on love and peace by the forces of hatred and violence. The newspapers commented: 'An Apostle of God's glory, a Messiah of human unity and true social reformer has fallen prey to religious intolerance'. It was another blot on human history, said the intellectuals. And the peace loving humanists felt that humanism had been ravaged.

SATGURU BABA HARDEV SINGH JI MAHARAJ

His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj was born on February 23, 1954 in Delhi. It was a divine gift to the divine family of the then Nirankari Baba Avtar Singh Ji and Jagat Mata Budhwanti Ji. As grand parents, they showered all the worldly as well as spiritual blessings on child Hardev. His parents Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji and Rajmata Kulwant Kaur Ji were equally affectionate.

With the growth of child Hardev, grew his thoughtfulness and sobriety. He saw every object and observed every event with due curiosity but used to keep silent. Respect and regards for elders and trait of humility could be noticed in him from the very childhood. Interest in congregations and listening to discourses also became conspicuous in him. The kind and pure hearted child Hardev was never found spend-thrift and emotional. He also started taking keen interest in photography.

Baba Hardev Singh Ji received his elementary education at home. With his sharp intellect, he learnt alphabets of Hindi, English, Punjabi and English and counting very quickly. Thereafter, he was sent to Rosary Public School, Nirankari Colony, Delhi, where by sweet nature and intelligence he cast spell on teachers and fellow students. They say that boy Hardev was often found in the class sitting thoughtfully with eyes half-shut. But he was always discovered to be fully attentive and responsive to what the teachers taught.

In 1963, Baba Hardev Singh Ji was sent to the residential Yadvendra Public School, Patiala, an institution of national fame, from where he passed the high school examination in 1969. His co-operative and compassionate nature made him popular with the teachers and the fellow-students alike. His school education was equally supplemented and cemented with spiritual touch received through the letters of his affectionate mother, Rajmata Ji.

During his stay in the school, young Hardev Singh Ji also developed keen interest in mountaineering. With his class-fellows and even alone, he would cover difficult terrains to reach certain places. This hobby added the trait of patience and perseverance in his life. He was never found tired or worried. Moreover he took keen interest in various sports. He learnt playing hockey from the game's wizard of Olympic fame, Dhian Chand. He was also quite skilful in vehicle driving.

On completion of school education at Patiala, Hardev Singh Ji returned to Delhi and started further education under Delhi University and also took keen interest in the socio-spiritual activities of the Mission. He became very regular in attending congregations (Satsang) and serving the devotees (Sewa).

In 1971, Hardev Singh Ji joined the Nirankari Sewa Dal as its primary member and enjoyed himself serving in cotton Khaki uniform. He organised "Youth Forum" in 1975, which focused on promoting truthful and simple living, service with devotion and love, refraining from incurring undue expenses and practising prohibition.

During the Annual Nirankari Sant Samagam in Delhi in 1975 Baba Hardev Singh Ji was married in a simple ceremony to Sawinder Ji, daughter of devoted saints Shri Gurumukh Singh Ji and Smt. Madan Ji of Farrukhabad (UP). Born on January 12, 1957, Pujya Mata Swinder Ji is well educated and duty conscious. Her affectionate care makes every visiting devotee feel at home.

SPIRITUAL MENTOR

Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj became the Spiritual Head of the Mission under tragic circumstances. On April 24, 1980 the orthodox fanatics had snatched from the Mission the Satguru and a crusader for peace and tranquility from the world, Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji. Young Hardev had lost not only the Satguru but his beloved father also. This was the moment when forbearance, patience and tolerance of every follower of the Mission was under severe stress and a grave test. The very future of the Mission had been challenged. Nirankaris who had been taught to surrender to the will of God were finding it difficult to accept the verdict of 'destiny' that sounded to them as a deliberate violation of 'divine law' by wicked forces among the humanity itself.

At the same time, every Nirankari believed that the Satguru is an ever-living entity which must manifest itself in some other physical frame or human body. They had, however, not to wait for long. Immediately after the funeral of the mortal remains of Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji at the electric crematorium in Delhi on April 27,

1980, Hardev was greeted and hailed as the Head of the Mission and everybody present witnessed the Satguru manifesting in him. Hardev who was known for his quiet nature, addressed the devotees as a perfect spiritual master.

His Holiness declared, "Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji's martyrdom is the will of God. Perceptions differ from people to people. The ignorant say that it may lead to bloodshed but the devotees believe that being a supreme sacrifice, it shall usher in peace and harmony. Imbibing such lofty ideals, we should continue to spread the Mission with greater zeal."

Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj ruled out even the remotest thought of vengeance saying that 'it would go contrary to what Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji lived and sacrificed his life for'. He exhorted the devotees to carry on his message of compassion, goodwill, love and Truth and pray for the welfare of one and all. He remarked, "It is not the assassination of Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji; it is the crucifixion of the ideals of those saints, Gurus and prophets who 'wished well for all'; it is the murder of the sentiments, the feelings that guided Bhai Kanhiya." He pointed out that 'nobody can *kill* Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji....The impression that he has made on the heart of every young and old is indelible indeed.' The result was quite instantaneous and healthy. Nirankaris remained non-violent even in the face of serious provocations from mis-guided fanatics and extremists.

PEACE AT ANY PRICE

The supreme sacrifice of Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji and the first holy discourse by Baba Hardev Singh Ji had far greater and much deeper significance. The former showed that the Mission had paid the heaviest price for peace. Earlier, more than 60 leading missionaries' forbearance was put to the hardest test when they were compelled to undergo the agony of judicial custody for about two years for the fault that was found to be not theirs at all. Now the Mission lost its spiritual mentor whose only fault was that he preached Truth, love and peace. Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji showed utmost respect to the saints, Gurus and prophets of the past. He held the holy scriptures in highest esteem. The only thing that he pointed out and stressed was that one must know the God he or she worships. Mere reading the religious books was not sufficient, he said. He wanted that their believers must follow the teachings in practical life, whosoever be the great master they believe and whatsoever the holy scripture they worship. His critics, however, did not try to verify the Truth he proclaimed, nor did they see how he sought to preach it. And he became a victim of their fanaticism, their ignorance.

Coming to the first holy discourse by Satguru Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj and the message contained therein, one must appreciate that the words came from a youth of 26 years whose great loving father had been assassinated brutally. Ordinarily, such a young man must be burning with feeling of vengeance. In this case, he had all the resources at his disposal. He had

only to give a hint that could cause riots and disturb peace for the entire country. But Baba Hardev Singh Ji chose to accept the price the Mission had been called upon to pay for peace. And with his call to Nirankaris to continue to spread the voice of truth while praying for goodwill of all, a disastrous mishap stood averted. No doubt the followers of the Mission continued to suffer both in terms of life and property here and there, the voice of truth spread far and wide carrying with it the message of peace, love, humility and tolerance. Even the families who lost their bread earners during the continuing violence targeted against Nirankaris took it as divine order, the will of God. They simply submitted to it and remained unshaken in their faith in the Mission and the noble values it stands for.

EXTENSIVE TOURS

In order to translate his commitment to peace, love and universal brotherhood into action, Baba Hardev Singh Ji lost no time and undertook extensive tours within the country and abroad. He was conscious of the fact that Nirankaris all over India and elsewhere in the world needed to be pacified and consoled over the sudden disappearance of Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji from their midst in physical form. The situation being what it was, it was not an easy affair to travel far and wide and organise mass congregations on a large scale. Even then, Baba Ji visited even the remotest areas and encouraged one and all to keep the flag of love, peace and human unity flying.

Though the spiritual tours of Baba Hardev Singh Ji sought to cover vast areas with long distances, his approach was at the same time intensive and intimate. He travelled mostly by road and met people as they were, where they were. He would mix up with them, sit with them, dine with them, so that he knows them as intimately as possible. Naturally, wherever he went, people found him sharing their pleasure and pain as a member of the family. In fact, Baba Ji showered his blessings just like any head of the family.

Baba Ji's tours abroad also took him to almost every part of the world. He was welcomed and received by large number of people as 'apostle of peace and Universal Brotherhood.' People from different states and countries would assemble at one centre and listen to His Holiness. Besides Indians, many others took interest in what the Mission sought to preach or Baba Ji wanted to convey.

The people including those connected with administration, particularly law and order, also did not take long to understand the reality. Baba Ji's discourses in different parts of the country and abroad and the over-whelming response from the masses they received convinced them that the Mission stands for peace and non-violence, progress and prosperity and lasting happiness based on spiritual enlightenment. After over 17 years today, when one looks back and realises the new heights the Mission has touched, feels fully convinced that Baba Hardev Singh Ji has lived upto his commitment of carrying those lofty ideals for

which Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji had laid down his life, to every nook and corner of the world.

EXPANSION

The Mission has found tremendous expansion in all directions during the past one and a half decades. The ever-increasing number of participants in the Samagams in Delhi and other places bears testimony to the fact that the message of the Mission is going home and attracting the seekers of truth. The attendance at the regular congregations is also growing thicker and thicker.

A number of new branches of the Mission have been set up and so is the case with Satsang Bhawans. Many new Missionaries have been identified in order to reach out places far and wide. The North Eastern and Southern States of India are also now fully familiar with the Mission and its philosophy and branches are functioning regularly in the various parts of these areas.

Baba Hardev Singh Ji is quite meticulous in his approach to the organisational requirements of the fast expanding Mission. He convened a conference in Delhi in 1987, on the lines of the two Mussoorie Conferences convened by Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji in 1965 and in 1973. It reviewed the decisions taken at Mussoorie and re-emphasised the areas that were considered relevant in the contemporary perspective. In addition' it was decided to organise blood donation camps at different places on the occasion of Manav Ekta Diwas as a gesture of selfless service to humanity and a humble

acknowledgement of the supreme sacrifice of Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji for the noble cause of human welfare. Another important decision of this Conference was to set up a full-fledged Department of Social Welfare and place it under the charge of a Member of the Executive Committee of the Sant Nirankari Mandal.

A similar conference described as a Special General Body Meeting was held in Delhi on March 20 and 21, 1997. More than 2,000 delegates participated. The Meeting reviewed the various decisions taken during the earlier three conferences and considered improvements where they had become necessary. Interestingly, most of the decisions taken at Mussoorie in 1965 and 1973 as also in Delhi in 1987 were found to be relevant even to the present day needs. However, certain points did require to be explained or redefined so that no superstitions could make inroads into the Mission's ideology and one's conduct based thereon. The Meeting decided that more attention should be paid to rural areas in the matter of spiritual tours, opening new branches and building Satsang Bahwans, without causing, of course, any inconvenience to the masses. Another important decision taken was that the training of the new Missionaries and orientation of the old may be encouraged as an organised effort. The Meeting also focused on the Golden Jubilee Nirankari Sant Samagam to be held in Delhi later during the year.

In order to encourage the participation of devotees in the expansion of the Mission, the organisation has been further decentralised.

Today Delhi has 29 Sectors, while the country is divided into 52 Zones. There is a provision of constant co-ordination at every level as also between the Headquarters and the smallest branch of the Mission. The tours of the missionaries are planned and organised in such a way that the benefit of their talent gets distributed over the widest possible area. The list of preachers (Pracharaks) was also reviewed in 1994.

The Santokh Sarovar Complex in Delhi is being developed into a centre of attraction not only for Nirankari devotees but others also. With its 5-acre reservoir of neat and clean water and another 20 acres of lush green lawns with rows of beautiful flower plants, the Complex is going to be a valuable anti-pollution gift to Delhi ecology. Quite close to the Complex, the Mission proposes to have a general hospital, for which 10 acres of land have already been acquired.

The Mission has found considerable expansion in other countries also. The followers of the Mission have spread out to almost every part of the world. In almost every salvation tour of His Holiness some new areas or countries are included. Consequently, in addition to the better known areas of U.K., U.S.A. and Canada, the countries like Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, Philippines, Spain, Sweden and several others have also received Baba Ji's blessings. The number of Sant Nirankari Satsang Bhawans abroad has more than doubled during the past one and a half decades.

Baba Hardev Singh Ji has paid special

attention to the youth abroad. Born in the countries of their residence, they stood cut off not only from their parental language, but also from the noble values for which the Indian culture has been known in the world. Baba Ji attracted them to the forum of the Mission and reminded them that they could adopt these values without coming into conflict with their environment. Today, the Nirankari youth in these countries is an example to others.

As a matter of fact, the Mission has never been orthodox and against the scientific and technological advancement and the development in other sectors provided it meant human welfare. It believes that man kind must endeavour to make life more and more comfortable. Today Baba Hardev Singh Ji is utilising the latest technology even for the spread of the Mission's message. The Mission uses the latest printing technology for its literature. The work at the Headquarters in Delhi has been computerised. The Publicity Wing is utilising the latest information technology including the global electronic networks. And now the Mission is on Internet also.

Thus we find that the Mission which began as a small effort towards spiritual enlightenment has become today a mass movement of God-Knowledge and Universal Brotherhood. Every Nirankari considers himself or herself fortunate to have Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj as the divine motivator for taking the message of the Mission to every doorstep. According to Baba Ji the Mission must work as a deep reservoir of peace, love and understanding to stem the wild

fire of hatred, jealousy and ill-will. Hence the stress on our own behaviour based on spiritual enlightenment. The Mission is certainly poised for greater and greater heights since the peace and tranquility, love and faith it preaches and practises is exactly what the trouble-torn world does need. ●



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